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In the application of : Toshio YAMAGIWA

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For: SEALANT-INCORPORATED TIRE MANUFACTURING METHOD AND
SEALANT-INCORPORATED TIRE

VERIFICATION OF TRANSLATION

Honorable Commissioner
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Chiyoko Nozawa, residing at c/o Ochiai & Co., TO Building, 6-3, Taito
2-chome, Taito-ku, Tokyo, Japan, declares:

(1) that she knows well both the Japanese and English languages;

(2) that she translated from Japanese to English the priority document of
Japanese Patent Application No. 10-366252 filed on December 24, 1998 of which
priority is claimed in the above-identified U.S. Patent Application No. 09/623,481;

(3) that the attached English translation is a true and correct translation
of the basic Japanese Patent application to the best of her knowledge and belief;
and

(4) that all statements made herein of her own knowledge are true and
that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and
further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false
statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both,
under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful
false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent
issuing thereon.

Dated: March 13, 2003

Chiyoko Nozawa

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[TITLE OF THE INVENTION]

SEALANT-INCORPORATED TIRE MANUFACTURING METHOD AND
SEALANT-INCORPORATED TIRE

[WHAT IS CLAIMED IS]

[claim 1] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method comprising the steps of superposing an inner liner (2, 2₁, 2₂) onto an inner surface of a tire body (1) prior to vulcanization and bonding at least a part of said inner liner (2, 2₁, 2₂) to the inner surface of said tire body (1) by vulcanization to define an annular sealant chamber (6) by said inner liner (2, 2₁, 2₂) inside a tread (15) of said tire body (1),

characterized in that a mold release sheet (9, 9₁, 9₂, 9₃) having a mold releasing property is placed on a portion of said inner liner (2, 2₁, 2₂) facing to said sealant chamber (6) prior to vulcanization.

[claim 2] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method according to claim 1, wherein at least a part of one surface of said mold release sheet (9) has the mold releasing property, and, in the vulcanization step, a part of said mold release sheet (9) which has no mold releasing property is bonded to a wall surface of said sealant chamber (6) by vulcanization.

[claim 3] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method according to claim 1, wherein said mold release sheet (9_1 , 9_2 , 9_3) is formed of a material soluble in a sealant (7), so that said mold release sheet (9_1 , 9_2 , 9_3) is dissolved into said sealant (7) by injecting said sealant (7) into said sealant chamber (6).

[claim 4] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method according to claim 3, wherein said mold release sheet (9_1 , 9_2 , 9_3) is formed of water-soluble paper or non-woven fabric.

[claim 5] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method according to claim 3, wherein said mold release sheet (9_1 , 9_2 , 9_3) is a film formed of a natural polysaccharide.

[claim 6] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method according to claim 1, wherein a plurality of mold release sheets (9_1 , 9_2 , 9_3) are laminated one on another.

[claim 7] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method according to claim 1, wherein said mold release sheet (9_2) is folded into a corrugated shape prior to vulcanization, and said mold release sheet (9_2) is expanded in the vulcanization step.

[claim 8] A sealant-incorporated tire, which is manufactured by the sealant-incorporated tire

manufacturing method according to any one of claims 1 to 7.

[DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION]

[Technical Field to which the Invention Belongs]

The present invention relates to a manufacturing method for a sealant-incorporated tire having an annular sealant chamber defined by an inner liner inside a tread, and relates also to a sealant-incorporated tire manufactured by this method.

[Prior Art]

A sealant-incorporated tire is known from Japanese Patent Application Laid-open No. 8-323875, for example. This sealant-incorporated tire has a sealant chamber at least a part of which is defined by an inner liner inside a tread of a tire body. The sealant chamber is filled with a sealant for sealing a puncture formed through the tread by a nail or the like to thereby delay air leakage from the puncture.

In manufacturing the above conventional sealant-incorporated tire, the inner liner is superposed onto the tire body prior to vulcanization. At this time, a mold release agent such as talc is preliminarily applied to a part of the contact surfaces of the inner liner and the tire body or to a part of the contact surfaces of inner

liner elements forming the inner liner. In this condition, vulcanization is performed to integrate the inner liner with the tire body and form the sealant chamber by leaving the portion to which the mold release agent is applied unbonded.

[Problem to be Solved by the Invention]

It should be noted here that in performing vulcanization by inserting a green tire including a tire body and an inner liner into a heating die, the inner liner is expanded to produce an area where the density of talc as the mold release agent is high and an area where it is low. As a result, the boundary between a bonded portion and an unbonded portion of the inner liner in the vulcanization process is not clearly defined, so that there is a possibility that the shape of the resultant sealant chamber may become imperfect. Accordingly, there is a problem that it is difficult to form a sealant chamber having a desired shape, and the degree of freedom in designing the shape of the sealant chamber is limited.

The present invention has been accomplished with the above circumstances in view, and it is an object of the present invention to clearly define the boundary between the bonded portion and the unbonded portion of the inner liner in vulcanizing the green tire, thereby

forming a sealant chamber having a proper shape.

[Means for Solving the Problem]

According to the invention as defined in claim 1, there is provided a sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method comprising the steps of superposing an inner liner onto an inner surface of a tire body prior to vulcanization and bonding at least a part of the inner liner to the inner surface of the tire body by vulcanization to define an annular sealant chamber by the inner liner inside a tread of the tire body, characterized in that a mold release sheet having a mold releasing property is placed on a portion of the inner liner facing to the sealant chamber prior to vulcanization.

With the above arrangement, the mold release sheet having the mold releasing property is placed on a portion of the inner liner facing to the sealant chamber in superposing the inner liner onto the inner surface of the tire body prior to vulcanization. Accordingly, this portion of the inner liner facing to the sealant chamber can reliably be prevented from being bonded by vulcanization to the inner surface of the tire body, and the remaining portion of the inner liner not facing to the sealant chamber can reliably be bonded by

vulcanization to the inner surface of the tire body. As a result, the degree of freedom in designing the shape of the sealant chamber can be improved, and the sealant chamber can be formed into a proper shape.

According to the invention as defined in claim 2 in addition to the arrangement of claim 1, at least a part of one surface of the mold release sheet has the mold releasing property, and, in the vulcanization step, a part of the mold release sheet which has no mold releasing property is bonded to a wall surface of the sealant chamber by vulcanization.

With the above arrangement, the mold release sheet has a portion having the mold releasing property and a portion having no mold releasing property. The portion having the mold releasing property can prevent bonding of the inner liner to a part of the inner surface of the tire body by vulcanization to thereby form the sealant chamber. The portion having no mold releasing property allows the inner liner to be bonded to the wall surface of the sealant chamber by vulcanization to prevent random movement of the inner liner. Further, by setting the portion having the mold releasing property into a part of the one surface of the mold release sheet, the other part of the one surface can be used to bond the inner liner to

the inner surface of the tire body by vulcanization, thereby stabilizing the shape of the sealant chamber.

According to the invention as defined in claim 3 in addition to the arrangement of claim 1, the mold release sheet is formed of a material soluble in a sealant, so that the mold release sheet is dissolved into the sealant by injecting the sealant into the sealant chamber.

With the above arrangement, if the sealant is injected into the sealant chamber, the mold release sheet is dissolved into the sealant. Accordingly, a reduction in sealability of the sealant due to the presence of the mold release sheet in the sealant chamber can reliably be prevented.

According to the invention as defined in claim 4 in addition to the arrangement of claim 3, the mold release sheet is formed of water-soluble paper or non-woven fabric.

With the above arrangement, the mold release sheet can reliably be dissolved into the sealant by injecting the sealant into the sealant chamber.

According to the invention as defined in claim 5 in addition to the arrangement of claim 3, the mold release sheet is a film formed of a natural polysaccharide.

With the above arrangement, the mold release sheet

can reliably be dissolved into the sealant by injecting the sealant into the sealant chamber.

According to the invention as defined in claim 6 in addition to the arrangement of claim 1, a plurality of mold release sheets are laminated one on another.

With the above arrangement, even if the mold release sheets are expanded with the tire body and the inner liner in the vulcanization step, the contact surfaces of the plural mold release sheets mutually slide to thereby prevent breaking of the mold release sheets. Accordingly, undesired bonding of the tire body and the inner liner by vulcanization can reliably be avoided.

According to the invention as defined in claim 7 in addition to the arrangement of claim 1, the mold release sheet is folded into a corrugated shape prior to vulcanization, and the mold release sheet is expanded in the vulcanization step.

With the above arrangement, even if the mold release sheets are expanded with the tire body and the inner liner in the vulcanization step, the corrugated mold release sheet which is folded into a corrugated shape is freely expanded, so that it is prevented from being broken. Accordingly, undesired bonding of the tire body and the inner liner by vulcanization can reliably be

avoided.

According to the invention as defined in claim 8, there is provided a sealant-incorporated tire which is manufactured by the sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method according to any one of the first to seventh aspects and features.

With the above arrangement, it is possible to provide a high-quality sealant-incorporated tire having a sealant chamber proper in shape.

[Mode for Carrying Out the Invention]

Mode for carrying out the present invention will now be described with reference to the embodiments of the present invention shown in the attached drawings.

Figs. 1 to 5 show a first embodiment of the present invention, wherein Fig. 1 is a laterally sectional view of a motorcycle wheel mounted with a tire; Fig. 2 is a first part of a flow diagram showing a manufacturing method for the tire; Fig. 3 is a second part of the flow diagram; Fig. 4 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along a line 4-4 in Fig. 2; and Fig. 5 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along a line 5-5 in Fig. 3.

As shown in Fig. 1, mounted on a rim R of a motorcycle wheel is a tubeless tire T including a tire body 1 and an inner liner 2 bonded to an inner portion of

the tire body 1 by vulcanization. The inner liner 2 is bonded by vulcanization at its right and left side portions except its central portion to an inner surface of the tire body 1, so that an air chamber 5 having a substantially circular shape in section is defined inside the inner liner 2, and a sealant chamber 6 having a substantially arcuate shape in section is defined between a non-bonded portion of the inner liner 2 and the inner surface of the tire body 1. The sealant chamber 6 is filled with a known liquid sealant 7.

The rim R includes an annular rim body 11 extending in the circumferential direction of the tire T and a pair of flanges 12, 12 extending radially outward from the laterally opposite ends of the rim body 11 to hold the inner circumference of the tire body 1. An air valve 13 for charging air into the air chamber 5 defined inside the inner liner 2 is supported through an air valve mounting portion 14 formed in one portion in the circumferential direction of the rim body 11.

The sealant chamber 6 defined between the inner liner 2 and the tire body 1 is maintained in a shape along an inner circumference of a tread 15 by air pressure in the air chamber 5. Accordingly, even when the tire body 1 is punctured by a nail or the like in the

radial direction of the tire T or from a side portion of the tread 15, a puncture formed through the tire body 1 is immediately filled and mended with the sealant 7, thereby delaying air leakage from the air chamber 5 through the puncture. Further, since the sealant 7 is kept contained in the sealant chamber 6 and does not enter the air chamber 5, there is no possibility that the air valve 13 or a pressure gauge and the like put to the air valve 13 may be clogged with the sealant 7.

A manufacturing method for the tire T will now be described with reference to Figs. 2 and 3.

The manufacturing method for the tire T includes an inner liner wrapping step, mold release sheet wrapping step, green tire wrapping step, die setting step, vulcanizing step, sealant injecting step, and inspecting step.

In the inner liner wrapping step, the cylindrical inner liner 2 of raw rubber is fitted around the outer circumference of a drum 23. In the subsequent mold release sheet wrapping step, a mold release sheet 9 is wrapped around the outer circumference of the inner liner 2. In the green tire wrapping step, each component of the tire body 1 is wrapped around the outer circumferences of the inner liner 2 and the mold release sheet 9 to form a

green tire 24.

Fig. 4 shows a lateral cross section of the green tire 24 wrapped around the drum 23. The inner liner 2 forming the innermost layer of the green tire 24 has a width W_1 , and the mold release sheet 9 stacked on the outer surface of the inner liner 2 has a width W_2 smaller than the width W_1 of the inner liner 2. Accordingly, the inner liner 2 partially projects from the opposite side edges of the mold release sheet 9. The mold release sheet 9 is formed from a fluoro resin sheet (e.g., Teflon sheet) or a silicone resin sheet having a thickness of 50 μ m or less, which are commercially available. For example, Aflex (trade name) manufactured by Asahi Glass Co., Ltd. may be used as the Teflon sheet.

One surface of the mold release sheet 9 is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment, so as to eliminate surface lubrication and thereby enhance adhesion to rubber. This treated surface of the mold release sheet 9 is brought into contact with the tire body 1, and the other untreated surface having the mold releasing property is brought into contact with the inner liner 2.

The corona discharge treatment is performed by generating high-voltage corona discharge between an

electrode connected to a high-voltage generator and a metal roll of which surface is coated with polyester, Hypalon, EP rubber, etc. while passing the mold release sheet 9 as a subject to be treated along the metal roll to thereby make ozone or nitrogen oxide that has created corona react with the exposed surface of the mold release sheet 9, thereby making this surface hydrophilic because of generation of resultant carbonyl groups or the like. The CS treatment is performed by carrying out plasma discharge treatment under vacuum instead of the corona discharge, and the function and effect similar to those of the corona discharge treatment can be obtained.

The tire body 1 of raw rubber is wrapped around the outer circumferences of the inner liner 2 and the mold release sheet 9 to form the green tire 24. The tire body 1 is comprised of a cord portion 25 wrapped around the radially outside of the inner liner 2 and the mold release sheet 9, a pair of bead portions 26, 26 fitted with the outer circumference of the inner liner 2 so as to be joined with axially opposite ends of the cord portion 25, and a tread portion 27 wrapped around the radial outside of the cord portion 25 and the bead portions 26, 26 so as to cover them.

Subsequently, in the die setting step, the green

tire 24 removed from the drum 23 is set between an upper die 29 and a lower die 30 for vulcanization and forming. Further, in the vulcanizing step as shown in Fig. 5, the upper die 29 and the lower die 30 are heated, and a pressure bag 31 placed inside the green tire 24 is expanded by air pressure to thereby bring the green tire 24 into pressure contact with the inner forming surfaces of the upper die 29 and the lower die 30, thus vulcanizing and forming the green tire 24 into a final product shape. By this vulcanization and forming, the inner liner 2 is integrated with the tire body 1.

At this time, the mold release sheet 9 is sandwiched and is compressed between the inner liner 2 and the tire body 1 by the pressure from the pressure bag 31 expanded. However, the other surface (i.e., the untreated surface) of the mold release sheet 9 abutting against the inner liner 2 is not bonded to the inner liner 2 by vulcanization, but the one surface (i.e., the treated surface) of the mold release sheet 9 abutting against the tire body 1 is bonded to the tire body 1 by vulcanization.

Thus, a portion of the inner liner 2 that must be bonded to the tire body 1 by vulcanization can reliably be bonded by vulcanization, and a portion of the inner

liner 2 that must not be bonded to the tire body 1 by vulcanization can reliably remain in the non-bonded state by using the mold release sheet 9, thereby forming the sealant chamber 6 having a proper shape between the inner liner 2 and the tire body 1. Furthermore, since the mold release sheet 9 is bonded and fixed to the inner surface of the tire body 1 by vulcanization, there is no possibility that the mold release sheet 9 may move in the sealant chamber 6 at random to hinder the free flow of the sealant 7, thereby reliably exhibiting a sealing effect by the sealant.

After the vulcanization and forming, the tire body 1 and the inner liner 2 integrated together are removed from the upper and lower dies. In the next sealant injecting step, the sealant 7 is injected into the sealant chamber 6 by using an injector or the like, thus completing the tire T. In the final inspecting step, the completed tire T is inspected to terminate all the steps. A second embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIGS. 6 and 7.

As shown in Fig.6, a tire T according to the second embodiment includes a first inner liner 2₁ bonded by vulcanization to a radially outside portion of an inner surface of a tire body 1, and a second inner liner 2₂

bonded by vulcanization to a radially inside portion of the inner surface of the tire body 1 and to right and left opposite end portions of the first inner liner 2₁. A sealant chamber 6 is defined between the first inner liner 2₁ and the second inner liner 2₂. A mold release sheet 9 is fixed by vulcanization and bonding to a wall surface of the first inner liner 2₁ facing to the sealant chamber 6.

Fig. 7 shows a green tire wrapping step for the tire T according to the second embodiment. A second inner liner 2₂ is wrapped around an outer circumference of a drum 23, a mold release sheet 9 is wrapped around the outer circumference of the second inner liner 2₂, and a first inner liner 2₁ is wrapped around the mold release sheet 9. A surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the first inner liner 2₁ is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment, and this treated surface of the mold release sheet 9 is bonded by vulcanization to the first inner liner 2₁. A surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the second inner liner 2₂ exhibits its mold releasing property to define the sealant chamber 6. According to the second embodiment, the function and effect similar to those of the first embodiment can be obtained.

A third embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to Figs. 8 and 9.

As shown in Fig. 8, a tire T according to the third embodiment includes a single inner liner 2 as similar to the tire T according to the first embodiment. The inner liner 2 is bonded by vulcanization at its opposite end portions to an inner surface of a tire body 1 as in the first embodiment. Additionally, the central portion of the inner liner 2 is also bonded by vulcanization to the inner surface of the tire body 1 over a given width (e.g., 5 mm). Accordingly, sealant chambers 6, 6 are separated into right and left chambers by a central bonded portion 32 of the inner liner 2, thereby stabilizing the shape of each of the sealant chambers 6, 6. Further, in the case that the tire T is large in size, movement of a sealant 7 charged in each of the sealant chambers 6, 6 can be minimized.

Fig. 9 shows a green tire wrapping step for the tire T according to the third embodiment. The inner liner 2 is wrapped around an outer circumference of a drum 23, and two mold release sheets 9, 9 are wrapped around the outer circumference of the inner liner 2 so as to be spaced apart from each other by a distance of 5 mm. Further, each component of the tire body 1 is wrapped

around the outer circumference of the inner liner 2, thus forming the green tire 24. A surface of each of the mold release sheets 9, 9 opposed to the inner liner 2 has a mold releasing property, and a surface of each of the mold release sheets 9, 9 opposed to the tire body 1 is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment to lose its mold releasing property. Accordingly, each of the two separate sealant chambers 6, 6 can be formed into a proper shape.

Incidentally, while the two mold release sheets 9, 9 are laterally spaced apart from each other in manufacturing the tire T having the structure shown in Fig. 8 according to the third embodiment, a single mold release sheet 9 may be used by the following two methods to obtain a similar effect.

According to the first method, the entirety of the surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the tire body 1 is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment to eliminate its mold releasing property, and a part of the surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the inner liner 2 is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment to eliminate its mold releasing property. Accordingly, a part of the surface opposite to the surface of the mold

release sheet 9 bonded to the tire body 1 is bonded to the inner liner 2, thereby obtaining the tire T having the structure as shown in Fig. 8. The part, of which mold releasing property is eliminated, of the surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the liner 2 may be in the form of lines or spots.

According to the second method, the surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the tire body 1 is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment to eliminate its mold releasing property, and slits or spot openings are then formed through the mold release sheet 9. Accordingly, the inner liner 2 is brought into contact with the tire body 1 through the above slits or spot openings of the mold release sheet 9, and is bonded by vulcanization to the tire body 1, thereby obtaining the tire T having the structure as shown in Fig. 8.

A fourth embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIGS. 10 and 11.

In contrast with the first to third embodiments each employing the single mold release sheet 9, according to the fourth embodiment, three mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ are positioned in a laminated state between a first inner liner 2₁ and a second inner liner 2₂ in the

condition of a green tire 24, as shown in Fig. 10. Each of the three mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ is formed of a material soluble in a sealant 7 composed mainly of water and ethylene glycol. Examples of this material include water-soluble paper, non-woven fabric, edible film and the like. The edible film is a film formed mainly of carrageenan as a natural polysaccharide extracted from the seaweed, and this film is soluble in water, so that it is soluble in the sealant 7.

By laminating the three mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ one on another as described above, it is possible to avoid a break of these sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ in a vulcanizing step wherein the green tire 24 is set between an upper die 29 and a lower die 30 and vulcanized while heating to be formed into a final product shape, thereby reliably preventing a possibility of bonding of the first inner liner 2₁ and the second inner liner 2₂ by vulcanization. More specifically, the mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ are expanded with the green tire 24 in opposite directions shown by arrows a-a in FIG. 11(A) in the vulcanizing step. At this time, the mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ slide mutually to be prevented from breaking, so that there is no possibility of direct contact of the first inner liner 2₁ and the second inner

liner 2₂ in the broken portion. More preferably, talc is attached to opposite surfaces of the central mold release sheet 9₂, thereby improving the mutual slide of the mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ to more reliably prevent the break.

Thereafter, the sealant 7 is injected into the sealant chamber 6. Because the mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ remaining in the sealant chamber 6 are dissolved as shown in Fig. 11(B), the sealability of the sealant 7 can reliably be prevented from being hindered by the remaining of the mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃.

A fifth embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIG. 12.

The fifth embodiment is characterized in that one (e.g., the central mold release sheet 9₂) of the three mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ used in the fourth embodiment is preliminarily formed into a corrugated shape. With this configuration, even if the upper and lower mold release sheets 9₁ and 9₃ are broken in the vulcanizing step wherein the green tire 24 and the three mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ are expanded so that the green tire 24 is formed into a final product shape, the corrugated mold release sheet 9₂ is expanded to become linear and is prevented from being broken, thereby

reliably preventing direct contact of the first inner liner 2₁ and the second inner liner 2₂ to prevent bonding of these inner liners 2₁ and 2₂ by vulcanization.

Having thus described the embodiments of the present invention, various design changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention.

For example, the mold release sheets 9, 9₁, 9₂, 9₃ in each of the first to third and fifth embodiments may be formed of a material soluble in the sealant 7. Further, while the three mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ are laminated one on another in each of the fourth and fifth embodiments, two mold release sheets or four or more mold release sheets may be laminated one on another.

While the mold release sheets 9, 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ are used to form the sealant chamber 6 in the first to fifth embodiments, there will now be described some methods of forming a sealant chamber by using a liquid mold release agent instead of the mold release sheets 9, 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃.

Figs. 13 to 19 show a method of forming a sealant chamber by using a liquid mold release agent, wherein Fig. 13 is a laterally sectional view of a motorcycle wheel mounted with a tire; Fig. 14 is a first part of a flow diagram showing a manufacturing method for the tire; Fig. 15 is a second part of the flow diagram; Fig. 16 is an

enlarged view taken in the direction of an arrow 16 in Fig. 14; Fig. 17 is a view taken in the direction of a line 17-17 in Fig. 16; Fig. 18 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along a line 18-18 in Fig. 14; and Fig. 19 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along a line 19-19 in Fig. 15.

As shown in FIG. 13, mounted on a rim R of the motorcycle wheel is a tubeless tire T including a tire body 1 and an inner liner 2 bonded to an inner portion of the tire body 1 by vulcanization. The inner liner 2 includes a sectionally substantially U-shaped peripheral wall 3 which is comprised of air chamber peripheral walls 3i, 3i located in a radially inside portion of the tire T and a sealant chamber peripheral wall 3o located in a radially outside portion of the tire T. A pair of connections connecting the air chamber peripheral walls 3i, 3i and the sealant chamber peripheral wall 3o in the peripheral wall 3 are connected to each other by a partition wall 4 formed integrally with the connections.

Air is charged into a sectionally substantially circular air chamber 5 which is defined between the air chamber peripheral walls 3i, 3i and the partition wall 4. A known liquid sealant 7 is charged into a sectionally substantially arcuate sealant chamber 6 which is defined

between the sealant chamber peripheral wall 30 and the partition wall 4.

The rim R includes an annular rim body 11 extending in the circumferential direction of the tire T and a pair of flanges 12 extending radially outward from the laterally opposite ends of the rim body 11 to hold the inner circumference of the tire body 1. An air valve 13 for charging air into the air chamber 5 defined inside the inner liner 2 is supported through an air valve mounting portion 14 formed through the rim body 11 at one circumferential position thereof.

The sealant chamber 6 of the inner liner 2 is maintained in a shape along an inner circumference of a tread 15 by air pressure in the air chamber 5. Accordingly, even when the tire body 1 is punctured by a nail or the like in the radial direction of the tire T or from a side portion of the tread 15, a puncture formed through the tire body 1 is immediately filled and mended with the sealant 7, thereby delaying air leakage from the air chamber 5 through the puncture. Further, since the sealant 7 is kept contained in the sealant chamber 6 and does not enter the air chamber 5, there is no possibility that the air valve 13 or a pressure gauge and the like put to the air valve 13 may be clogged with the sealant 7.

A manufacturing method for the tire T will now be described with reference to Figs. 14 and 15.

The manufacturing method for the tire T includes a material kneading step, inner liner extrusion molding step, cutting step, cut-opening step, hole making step, joining step, liquid mold release agent injecting step, drum wrapping step, green tire molding step, die setting step, vulcanizing step, sealant injecting step, hole closing step, and inspecting step.

A material kneaded in the material kneading step is extrusion-molded in the inner liner extrusion molding step to mold the inner liner 2 of raw rubber. The inner liner 2 is integrally comprised of a sealant chamber peripheral wall forming a peripheral wall 3 (see Fig. 13), a pair of air chamber peripheral walls 3i, 3i and a partition wall 4. The sealant chamber peripheral wall 3o and the partition wall 4 are connected to form a sectionally circular shape, and the pair of air chamber walls 3i, 3i are connected to a connecting portion. In the next cutting step, the inner liner 2 is cut into a given length. In the next hole making step, an injection hole 8 is opened through the partition wall 4 of the inner liner 2.

In the next joining step, the opposite end portions

of the inner liner 2 cut in the cutting step are joined together to form an annular shape. As shown in Figs. 16 and 17, the cut opposite end portions of the inner liner 2 are held by a pair of holders 19 to be jointed to each other. Each holder 19 is comprised of an upper die 20 and a lower die 21 which are capable of being relatively opened and closed. The upper die 20 and the lower die 21 have opposed surfaces formed with holding surfaces 20₁ and 21₁ of shallow recess shape, respectively, to hold the inner liner 2 in a flatly compressed state. The sealant chamber peripheral wall 30 of the inner liner 2 is fitted with the holding surface 20₁ of the upper die 20, and the air chamber peripheral walls 31, 31 and the partition wall 4 of the inner liner 2 are fitted with the holding surface 21₁ of the lower die 21.

In the next liquid mold release agent injecting step, a liquid mold release agent 9 is injected from the injection hole 8 of the partition wall 4 of the inner liner 2 into the sealant chamber 6. In the next drum wrapping step, the annular inner liner 2 having the liquid mold release agent 9 contained in the sealant chamber 6 in the liquid mold release agent injecting step is fitted around the outer circumference of a drum 23. In the next green tire molding step, each component of the

tire body 1 is wrapped around the outer circumference of the inner liner 2 to form a green tire 24.

As shown in FIG. 18, the green tire 24 is comprised of a cord portion 25 wrapped around the radially outside of the inner liner 2, a pair of bead portions 26, 26 fitted with the drum 23 so as to be joined with the axially opposite ends of the cord portion 25, and a tread portion 27 wrapped around the radially outside of the cord portion 25 and the bead portions 26 so as to cover them.

In the die setting step, the green tire 24 removed from the drum 23 is set between an upper die 29 and a lower die 30 for vulcanization and forming. In the vulcanizing step as shown in FIG. 19, the upper die 29 and the lower die 30 are heated, and a pressure bag 31 placed inside the green tire 24 is expanded by air pressure to thereby bring the green tire 24 into pressure contact with the forming surfaces of the upper die 29 and the lower die 30, thus vulcanizing and forming the green tire 24 into a final product shape.

At this time, the sealant chamber peripheral wall 30 and the partition wall 4 of the inner liner 2 are sandwiched under pressure between the pressure bag 31 and the tire body 1. However, since the liquid mold release

agent 9 is adhered between the contact surfaces of the sealant chamber peripheral wall 3o and the partition wall 4, these walls 3o and 4 are not bonded to each other by vulcanization. On the other hand, the contact surfaces of the sealant chamber wall 3o and the tire body 1 to which the liquid mold release agent 9 is not adhered, and the contact surfaces of the air chamber peripheral walls 3i, 3i and the tire body 1 are bonded to each other by vulcanization. Furthermore, even when the inner liner 2 is expanded in vulcanizing and forming it, the liquid mold release agent 9 having fluidity easily spreads over the contact surfaces of the sealant chamber peripheral wall 3o and the partition wall 4, thereby obviating the possibility of bonding of the contact surfaces of the sealant chamber peripheral wall 3o and the partition wall 4 by vulcanization. Accordingly, the sealant chamber 6 defined between the sealant chamber peripheral wall 3o and the partition wall 4 can be formed into a proper shape.

The total thickness of the sealant chamber peripheral wall 3o and the partition wall 4 of the inner liner 2 is larger than the thickness of each of the air chamber peripheral walls 3i, 3i, so that steps are generated at the opposite ends of the partition wall 4

(see an enlarged encircled portion in FIG. 19). To absorb the above-described steps, the outer surface of the pressure bag 31 is formed with a step portion 31₁, thereby pressing the sealant chamber peripheral wall 30, the partition wall 4, and the air chamber peripheral walls 3i, 3i to the inner surface of the tire body 1 under a uniform pressure.

After the vulcanizing step, the tire body 1 and the inner liner 2 integrated together are removed from the upper and lower dies. In the next sealant injecting step, the sealant 7 is injected from the injection hole 8 of the partition wall 4 into the sealant chamber 6. In the next hole closing step, an adhesive tape 32 is attached to the injection hole 8, thus completing the tire T. In the final inspecting step, the tire T completed is inspected to terminate all the steps.

A second method of forming a sealant chamber by using a liquid mold release agent will now be described with reference to FIG. 20.

This method is characterized in the shape of an inner liner 2 extrusion-molded in the inner liner extruding step. More specifically, the inner liner 2 integrally has a sectionally circular peripheral wall 3 and a sectionally S-shaped partition wall 4 dividing the

peripheral wall 3 into two parts. In the next cutting step, the inner liner 2 is cut into a given length. In the next cut-opening step, the peripheral wall 3 of the inner liner 2 is cut in its longitudinal direction to thereby form a sealant chamber peripheral wall 3o and a pair of air chamber peripheral walls 3i, 3i. The subsequent steps are similar to those of the first method mentioned above.

In the second method of forming a sealant chamber by using a liquid mold release agent, the inner liner 2 includes a sealant chamber 6 of a bag-shape which is defined by the sealant chamber peripheral wall 3o and the partition wall 4. Alternatively, the sealant chamber 6 may be defined between the inner liner 2 and the inner surface of the tire body 1 by bonding the opposite side edges of a sheet-formed inner liner to the inner surface of the tire body 1 by vulcanization. In this case, the vulcanizing step may be carried out in the state in which the inner liner 2 is superposed onto the inner surface of the tire body 1, while the liquid mold release agent 9 is preliminarily applied to a portion of the inner liner facing to the sealant chamber 6.

[Effect of the Invention]

As described above, according to the invention as

defined in claim 1, the mold release sheet having the mold releasing property is placed on a portion of the inner liner facing to the sealant chamber in superposing the inner liner onto the inner surface of the tire body prior to vulcanization. Accordingly, this portion of the inner liner facing to the sealant chamber can reliably be prevented from being bonded by vulcanization to the inner surface of the tire body, and the remaining portion of the inner liner not facing to the sealant chamber can reliably be bonded by vulcanization to the inner surface of the tire body. As a result, the degree of freedom in designing the shape of the sealant chamber can be improved, and the sealant chamber can be formed into a proper shape.

According to the invention as defined in claim 2, the mold release sheet has a portion having the mold releasing property and a portion having no mold releasing property. The portion having the mold releasing property can prevent bonding of the inner liner to a part of the inner surface of the tire body by vulcanization to thereby form the sealant chamber. The portion having no mold releasing property allows the inner liner to be bonded to the wall surface of the sealant chamber by vulcanization to prevent random movement of the inner

liner. Further, by setting the portion having the mold releasing property into a part of the one surface of the mold release sheet, the other part of the one surface can be used to bond the inner liner to the inner surface of the tire body by vulcanization, thereby stabilizing the shape of the sealant chamber.

According to the invention as defined in claim 3, if the sealant is injected into the sealant chamber, the mold release sheet is dissolved into the sealant. Accordingly, a reduction in sealability of the sealant due to the presence of the mold release sheet in the sealant chamber can reliably be prevented.

According to the invention as defined in claim 4, the mold release sheet can reliably be dissolved into the sealant by injecting the sealant into the sealant chamber.

According to the invention as defined in claim 5, the mold release sheet can reliably be dissolved into the sealant by injecting the sealant into the sealant chamber.

According to the invention as defined in claim 6, even if the mold release sheets are expanded with the tire body and the inner liner in the vulcanization step, the contact surfaces of the plural mold release sheets mutually slide to thereby prevent breaking of the mold release sheets. Accordingly, undesired bonding of the

tire body and the inner liner by vulcanization can reliably be avoided.

According to the invention as defined in claim 7, even if the mold release sheets are expanded with the tire body and the inner liner in the vulcanization step, the corrugated mold release sheet which is folded into a corrugated shape is freely expanded, so that it is prevented from being broken. Accordingly, undesired bonding of the tire body and the inner liner by vulcanization can reliably be avoided.

According to the invention as defined in claim 8, it is possible to provide a high-quality sealant-incorporated tire having a sealant chamber proper in shape.

[BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS]

[FIG. 1]

Fig. 1 is a laterally sectional view of a motorcycle wheel mounted with a tire.

[FIG. 2]

FIG. 2 is a first part of a flow diagram showing a manufacturing method for the tire.

[FIG. 3]

FIG. 3 is a second part of the flow diagram.

[FIG. 4]

Fig. 4 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along a line 4-4 in Fig. 2.

[FIG. 5]

Fig. 5 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along a line 5-5 in Fig. 3.

[FIG. 6]

Fig. 6 is a laterally sectional view of a motorcycle wheel mounted with a tire according to a second embodiment of the present invention.

[FIG. 7]

Fig. 7 is a sectional view similar to Fig. 4, according to the second embodiment.

[FIG. 8]

Fig. 8 is a laterally sectional view of a motorcycle wheel mounted with a tire according to a third embodiment of the present invention.

[FIG. 9]

Fig. 9 is a sectional view similar to Fig. 4, according to the third embodiment.

[FIG. 10]

Fig. 10 is a sectional view similar to Fig. 4, according to a fourth embodiment.

[FIG. 11]

Fig. 11 are sectional views respectively showing a

condition where a tire vulcanizing step is finished and a condition where a sealant injecting step is finished, according to the fourth embodiment.

[FIG. 12]

Fig. 12 is a sectional view similar to Fig. 4, according to a fifth embodiment.

[FIG. 13]

FIG. 13 is a laterally sectional view of a motorcycle wheel mounted with a tire manufactured by a first method of forming a sealant chamber by using a liquid mold release agent.

[FIG. 14]

FIG. 14 is a first part of a flow diagram showing a manufacturing method for the tire.

[FIG. 15]

FIG. 15 is a second part of the flow diagram.

[FIG. 16]

FIG. 16 is an enlarged view taken in the direction of an arrow 16 in FIG. 14.

[FIG. 17]

FIG. 17 is a view taken in the direction of a line 17-17 in FIG. 16.

[FIG. 18]

Fig. 18 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken

along a line 18-18 in Fig. 14.

[FIG. 19]

Fig. 19 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along a line 19-19 in Fig. 15.

[FIG. 20]

FIG. 20 is a view similar to FIG. 14, showing a second method of forming a sealant chamber by using a liquid mold release agent.

[Explanation of Reference Numerals]

1: tire body

2: inner liner

2₁: first inner liner (inner liner)

2₂: second inner liner (inner liner)

6: sealant chamber

7: sealant

9: mold release sheet

9₁: mold release sheet

9₂: mold release sheet

9₃: mold release sheet

15: tread

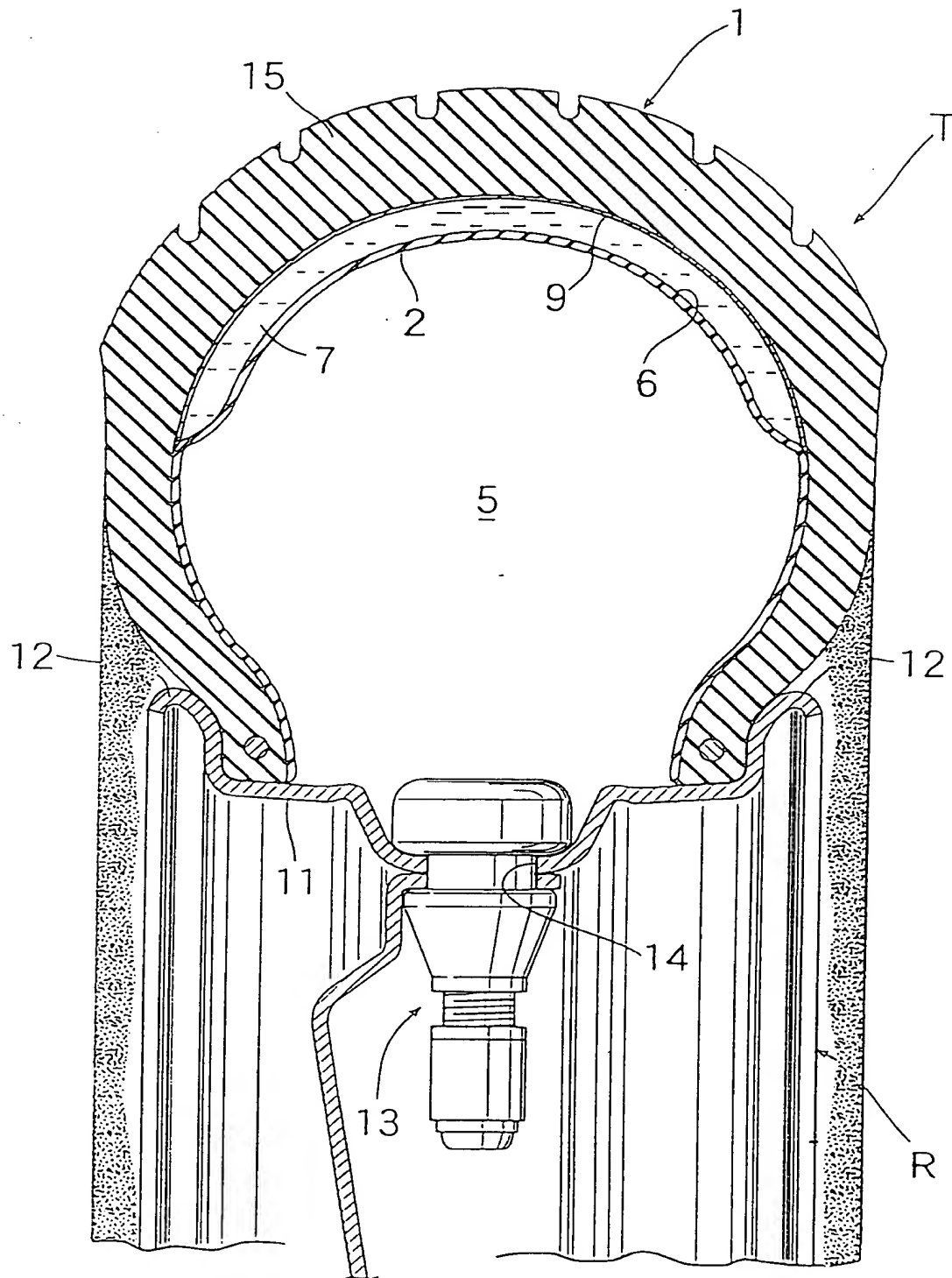


図 2
 FIG. 2

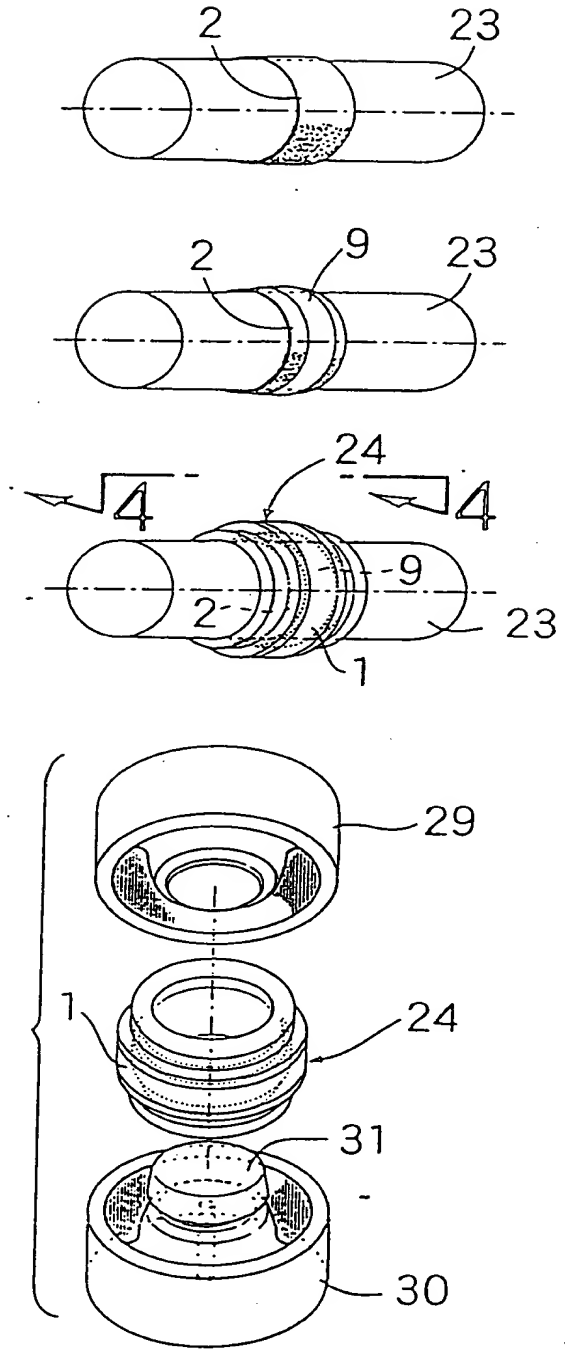
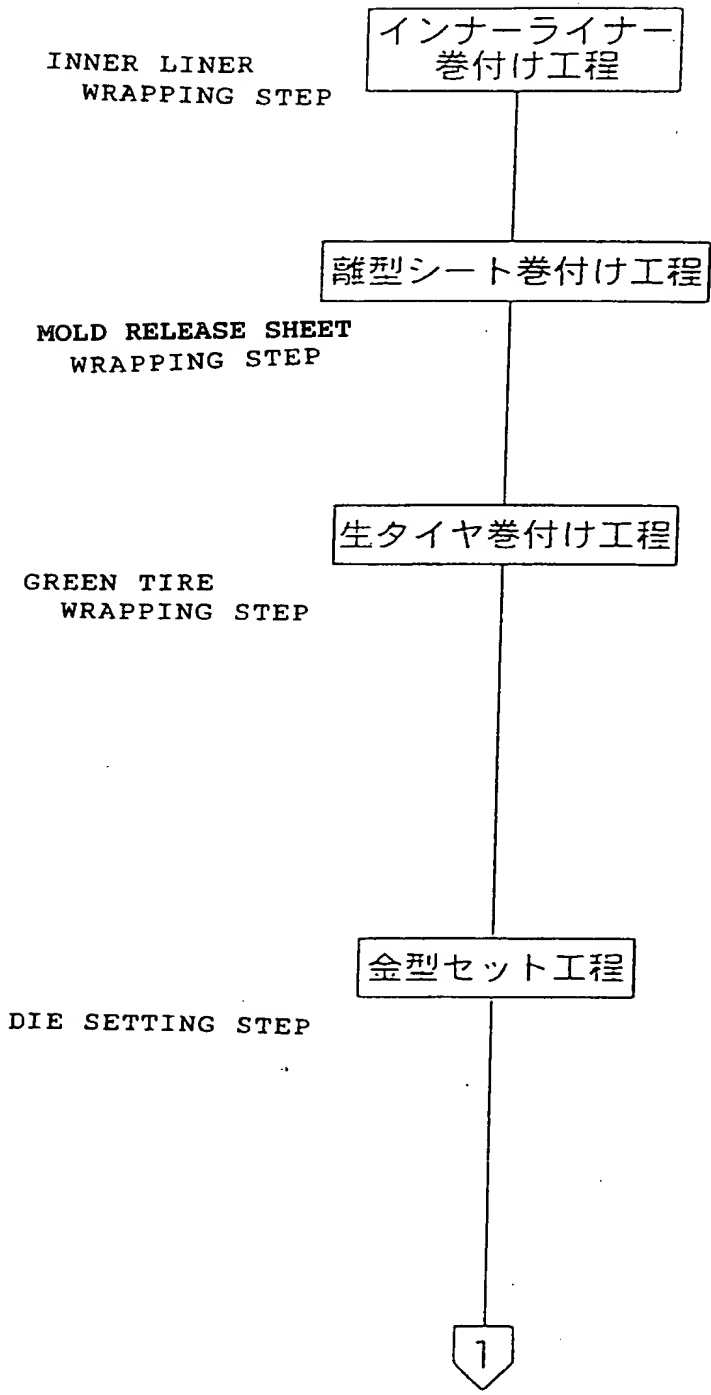


図 3
FIG. 3

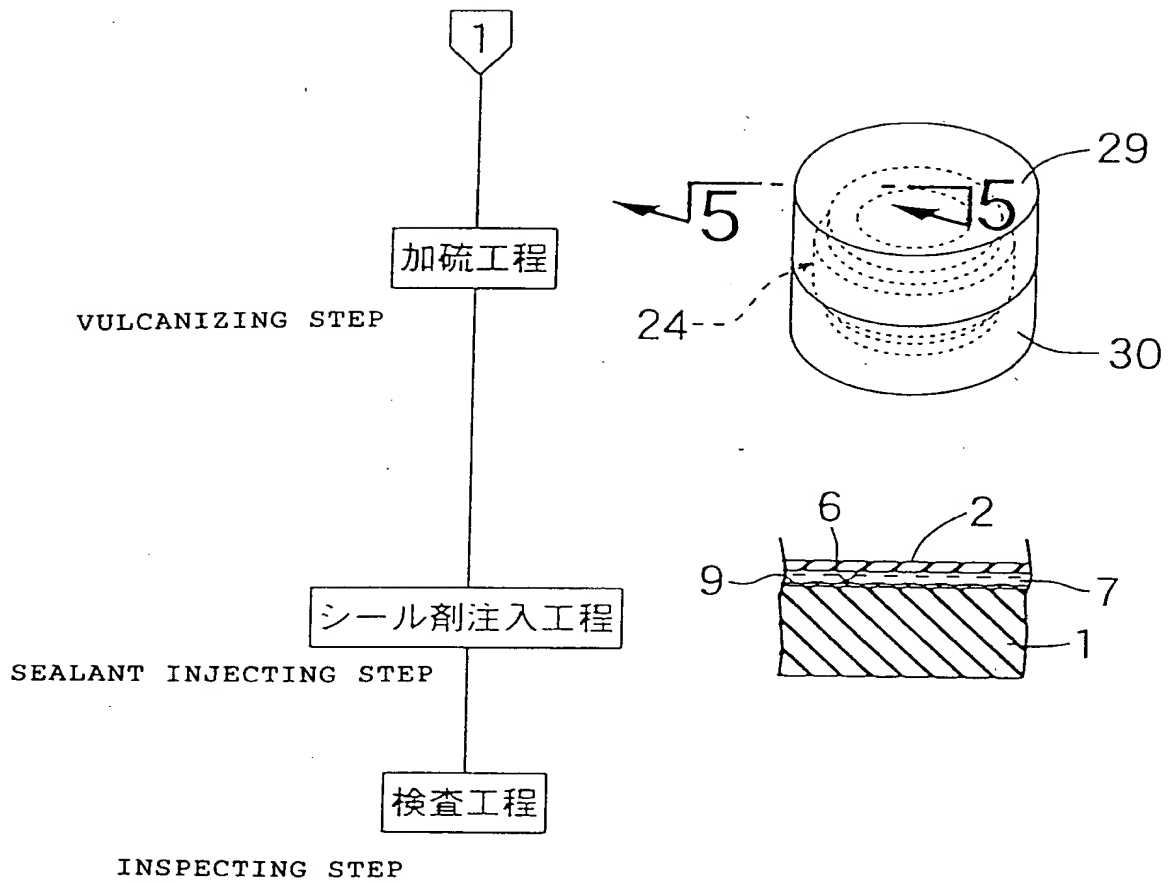




FIG. 4

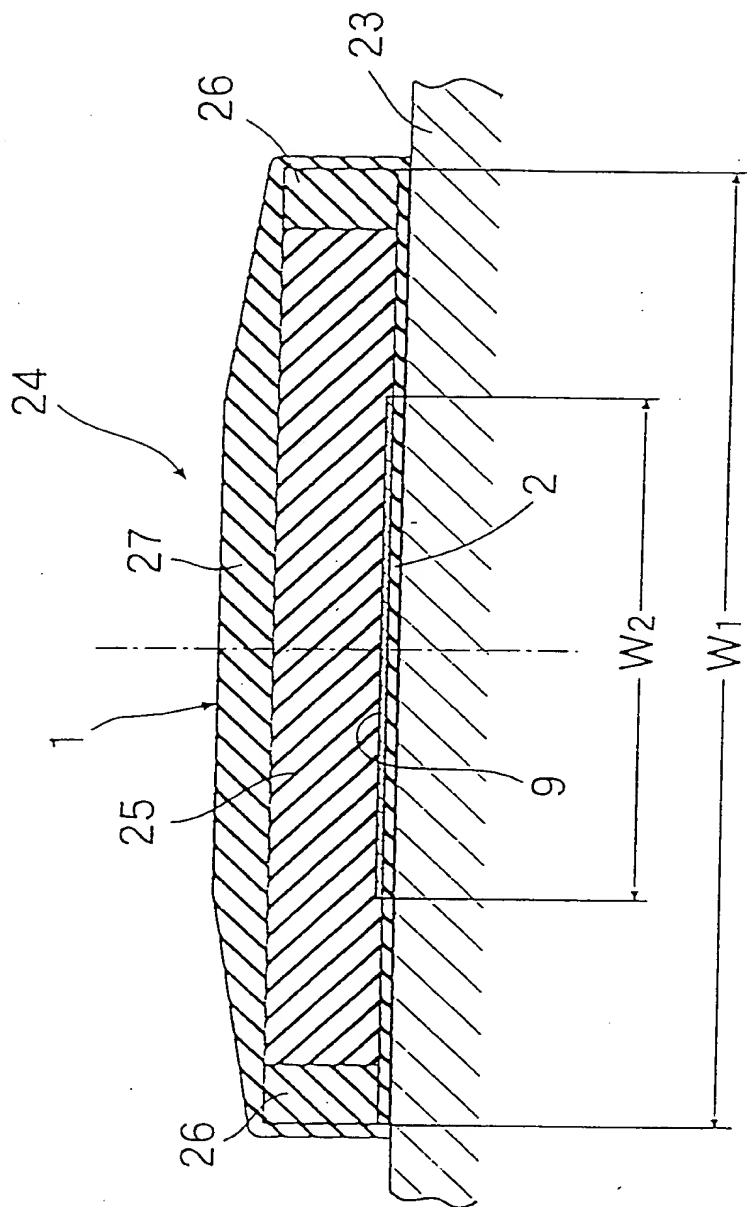


FIG. 5

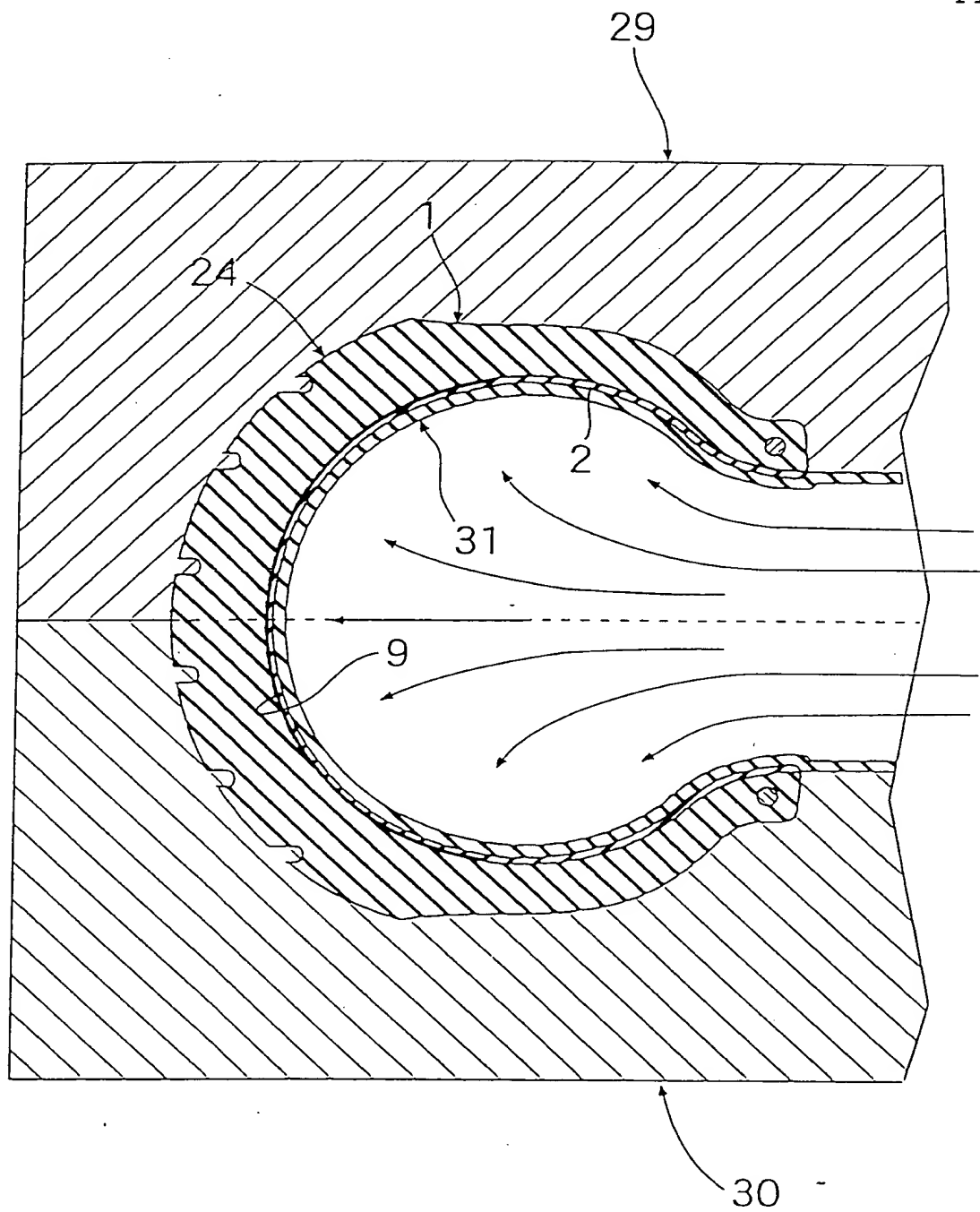
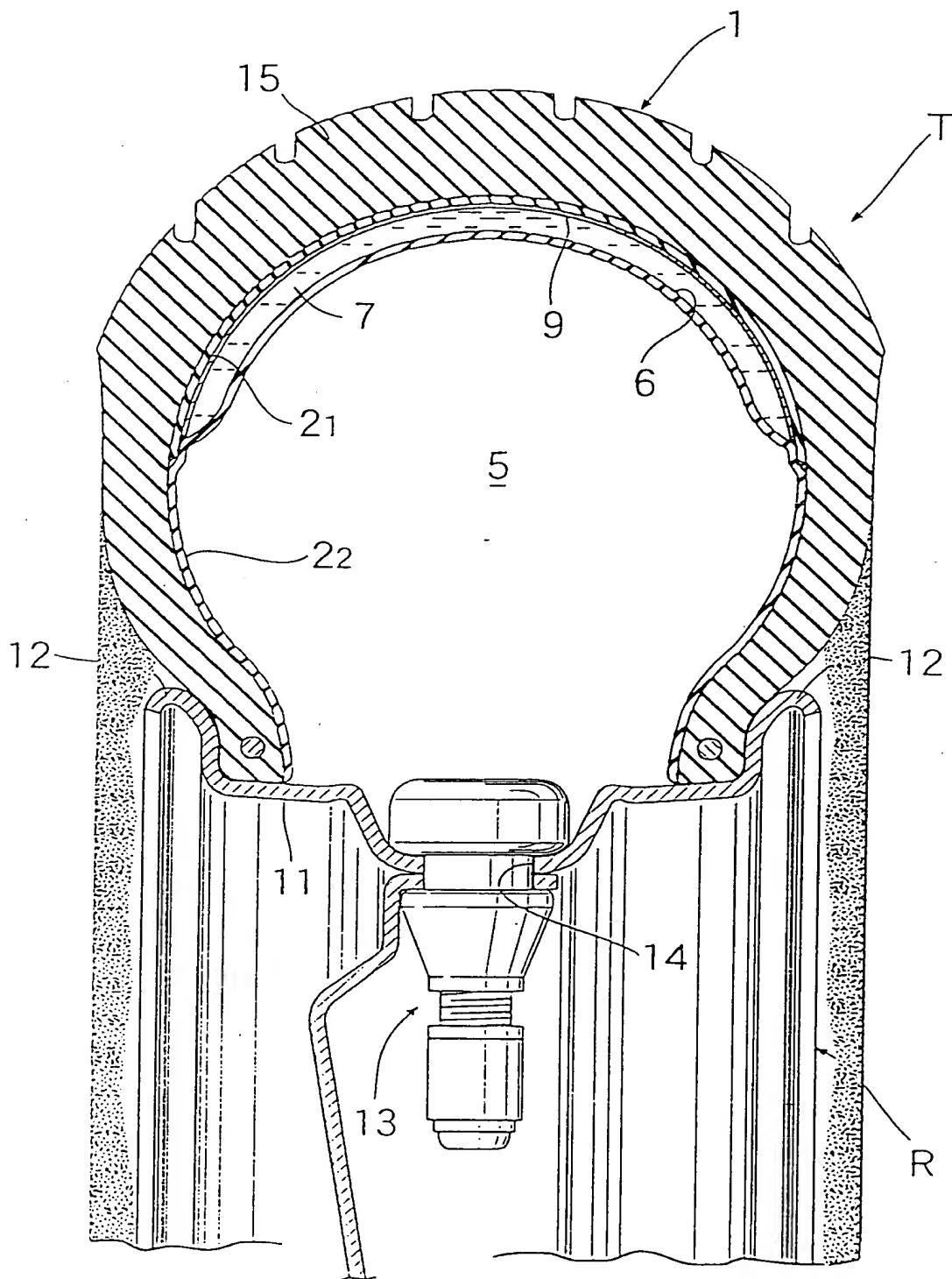
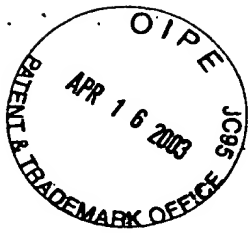
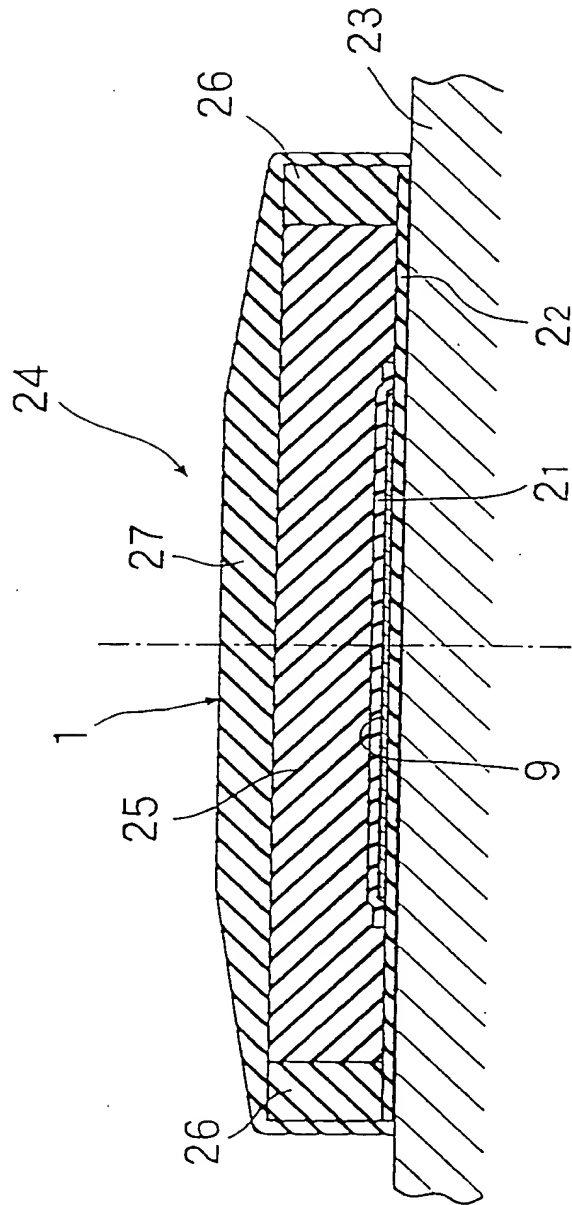


図 6
FIG. 6





7
FIG. 7



8
 FIG. 8

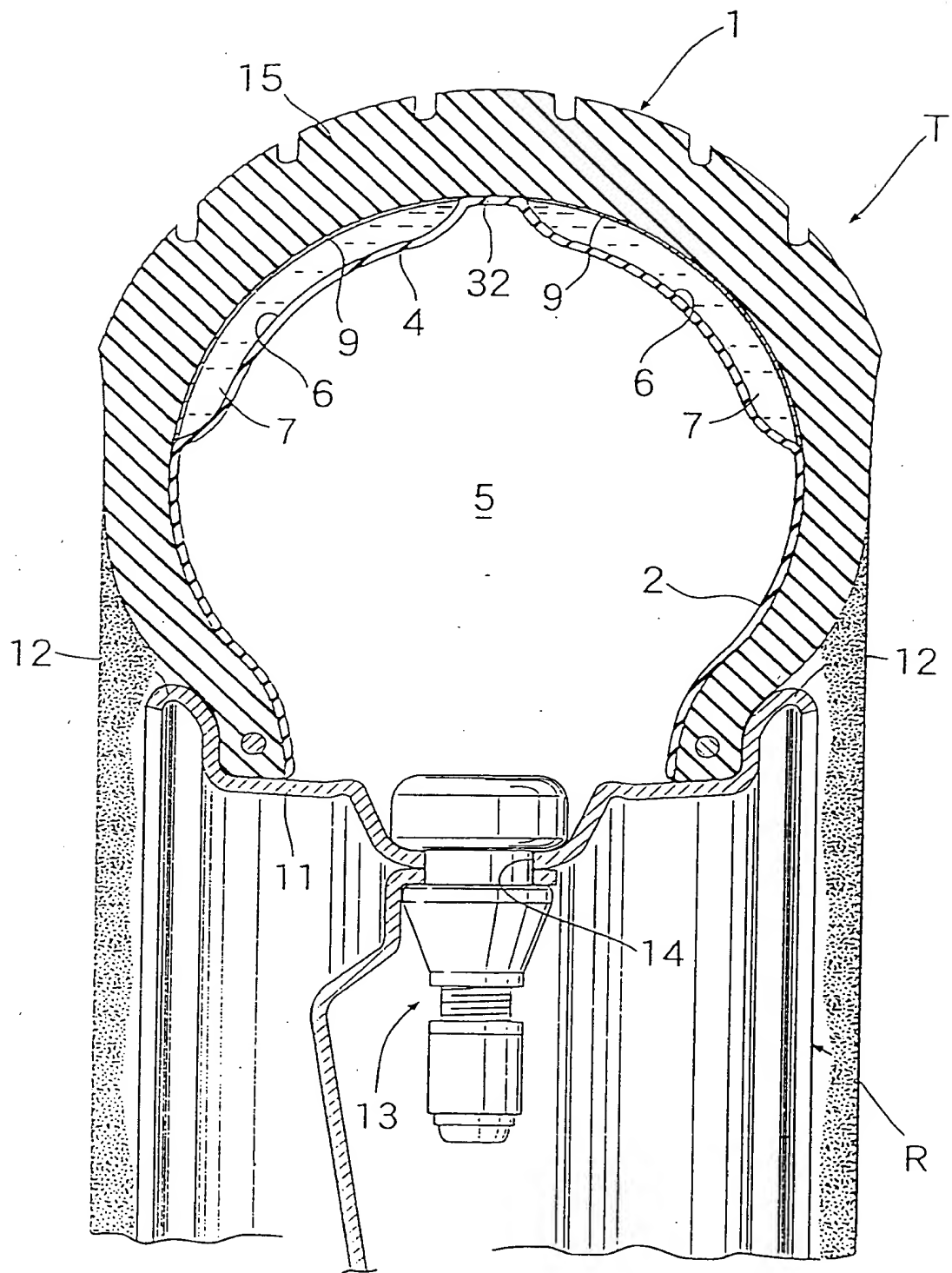
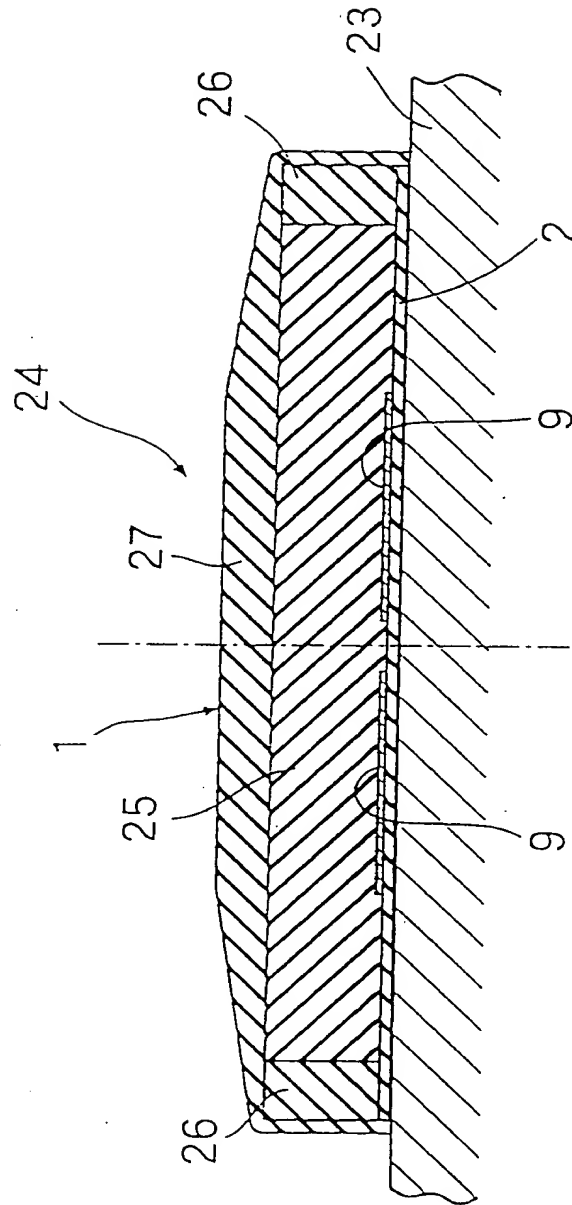




FIG. 9



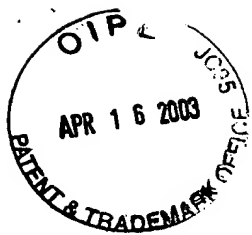
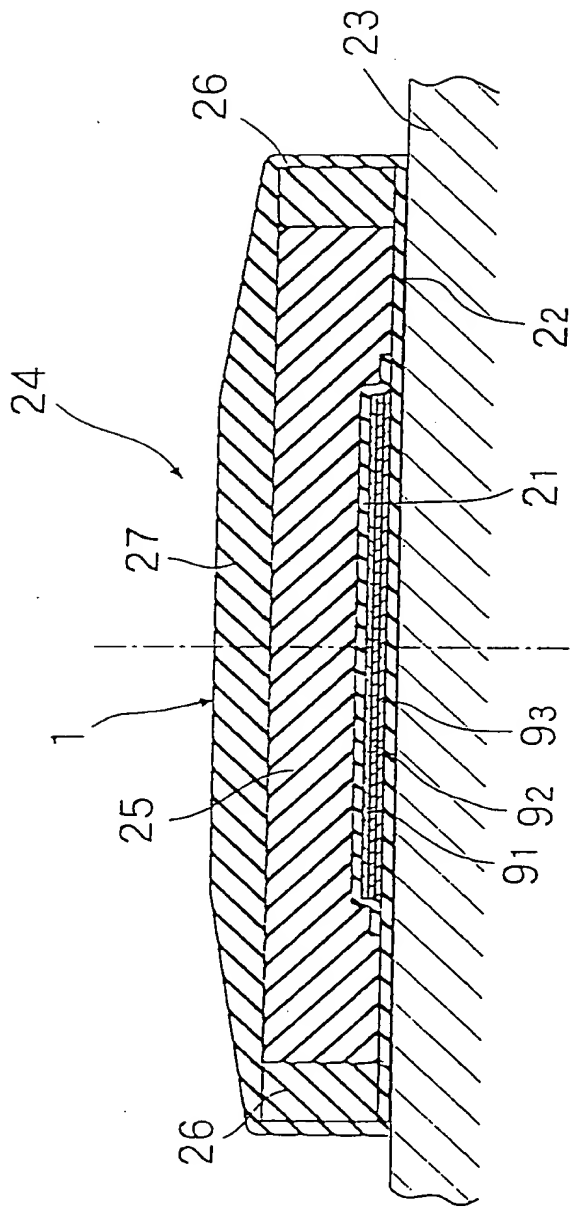


FIG. 10



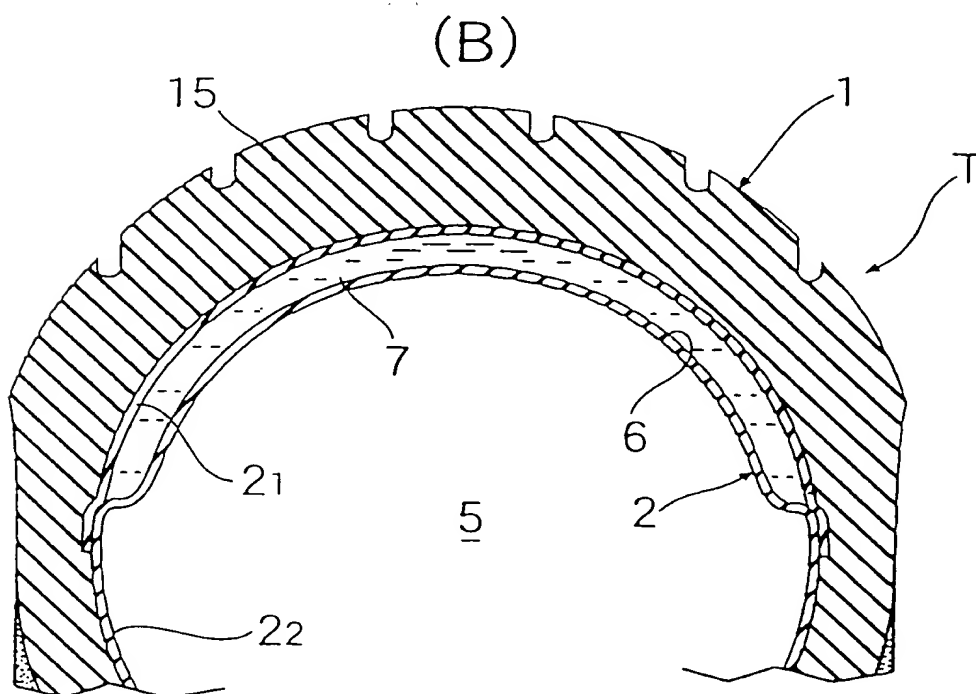
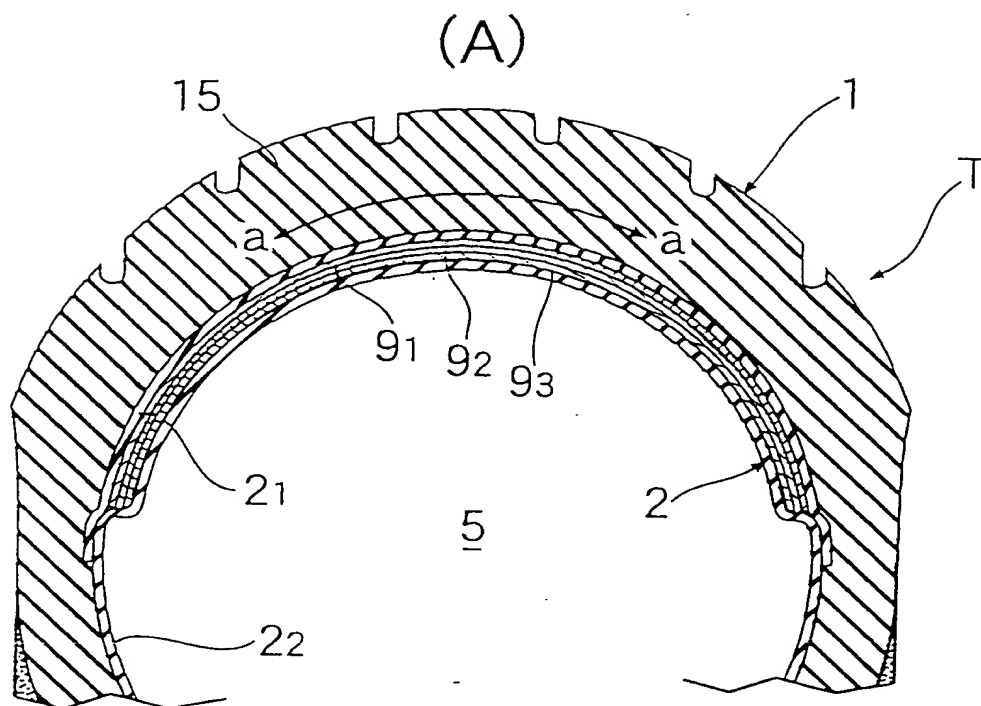
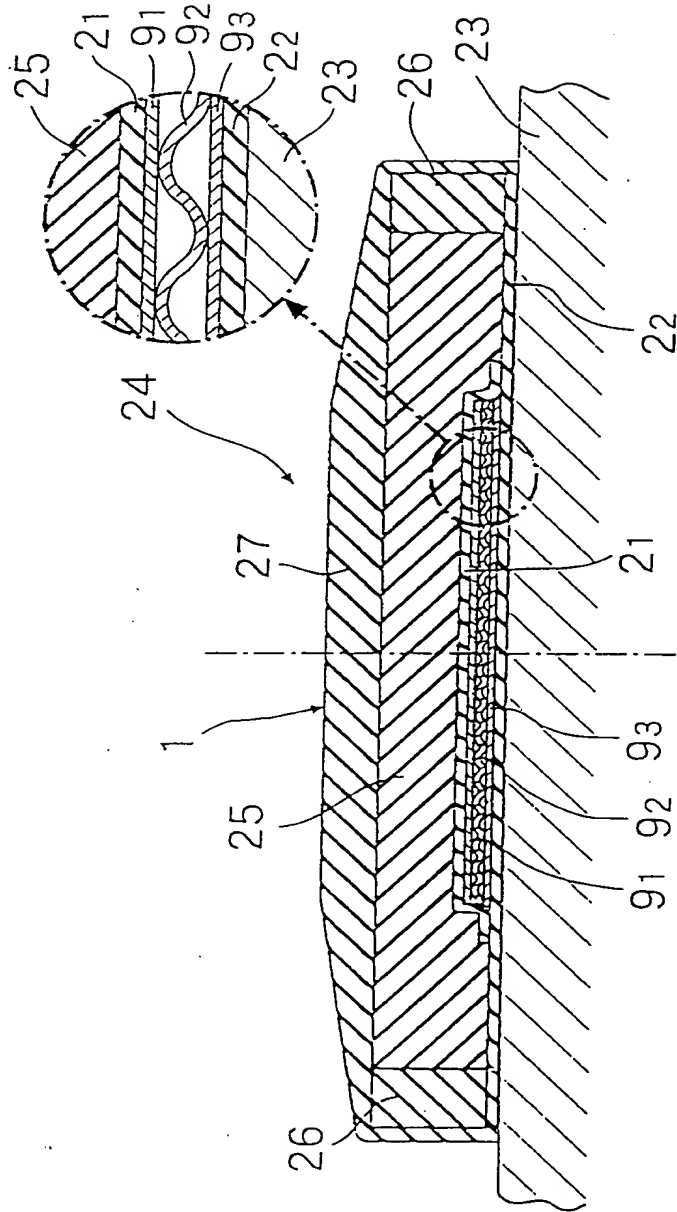
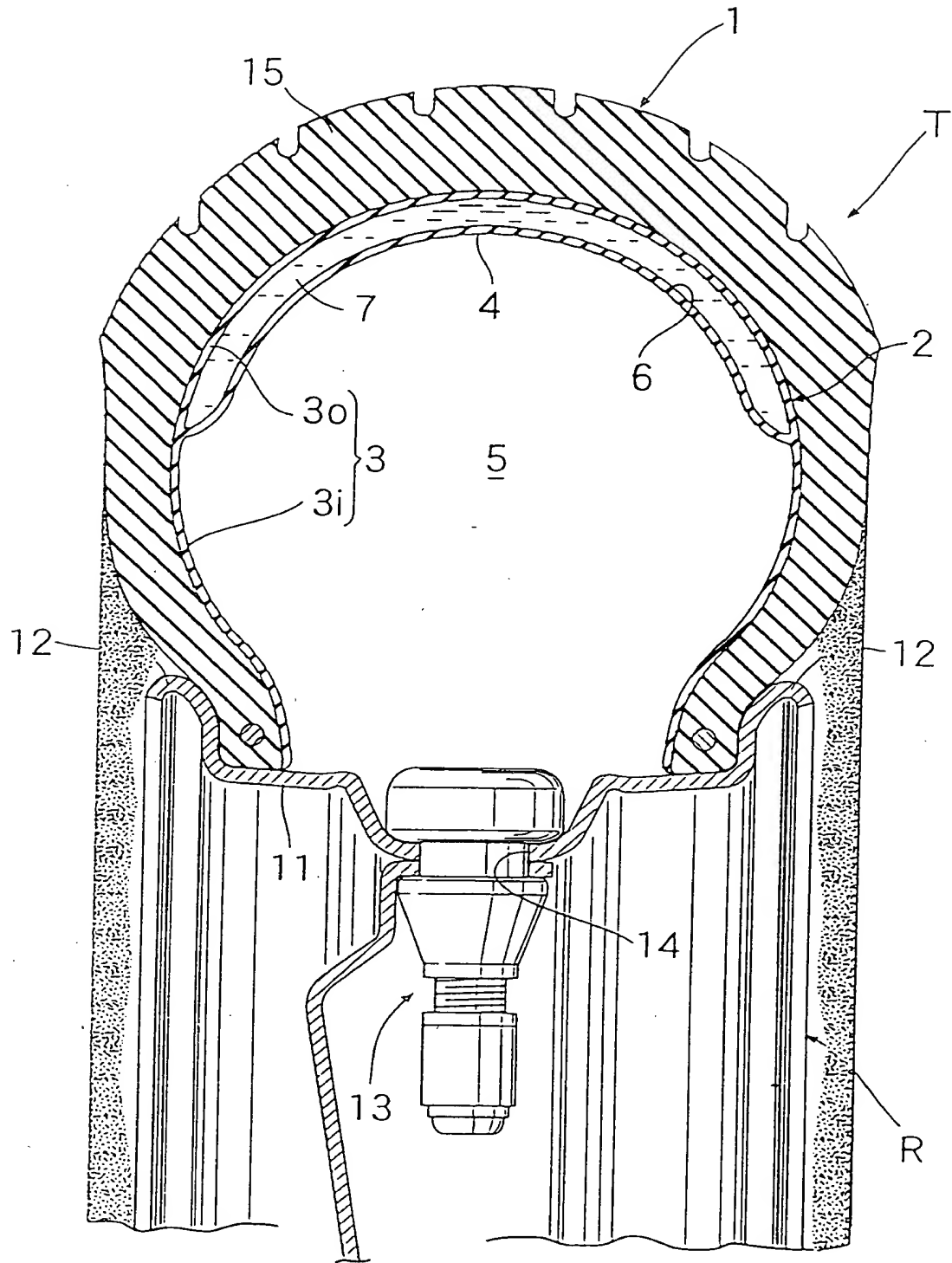


FIG. 12



13
 FIG. 13



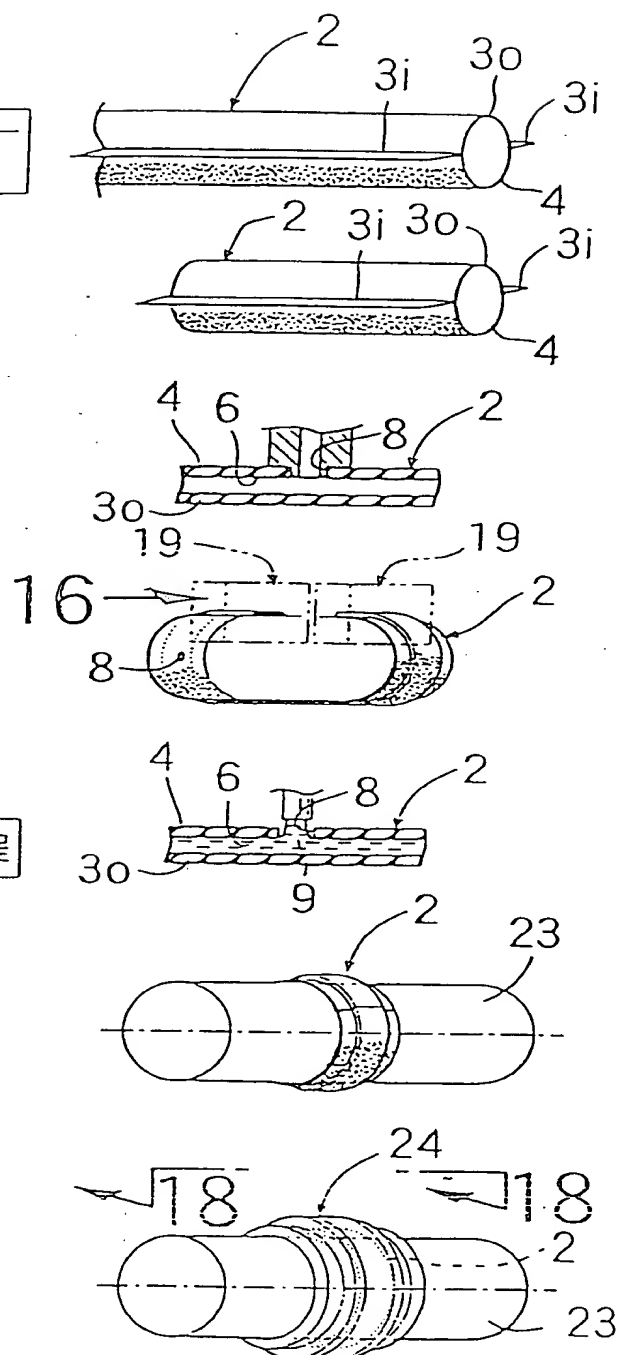
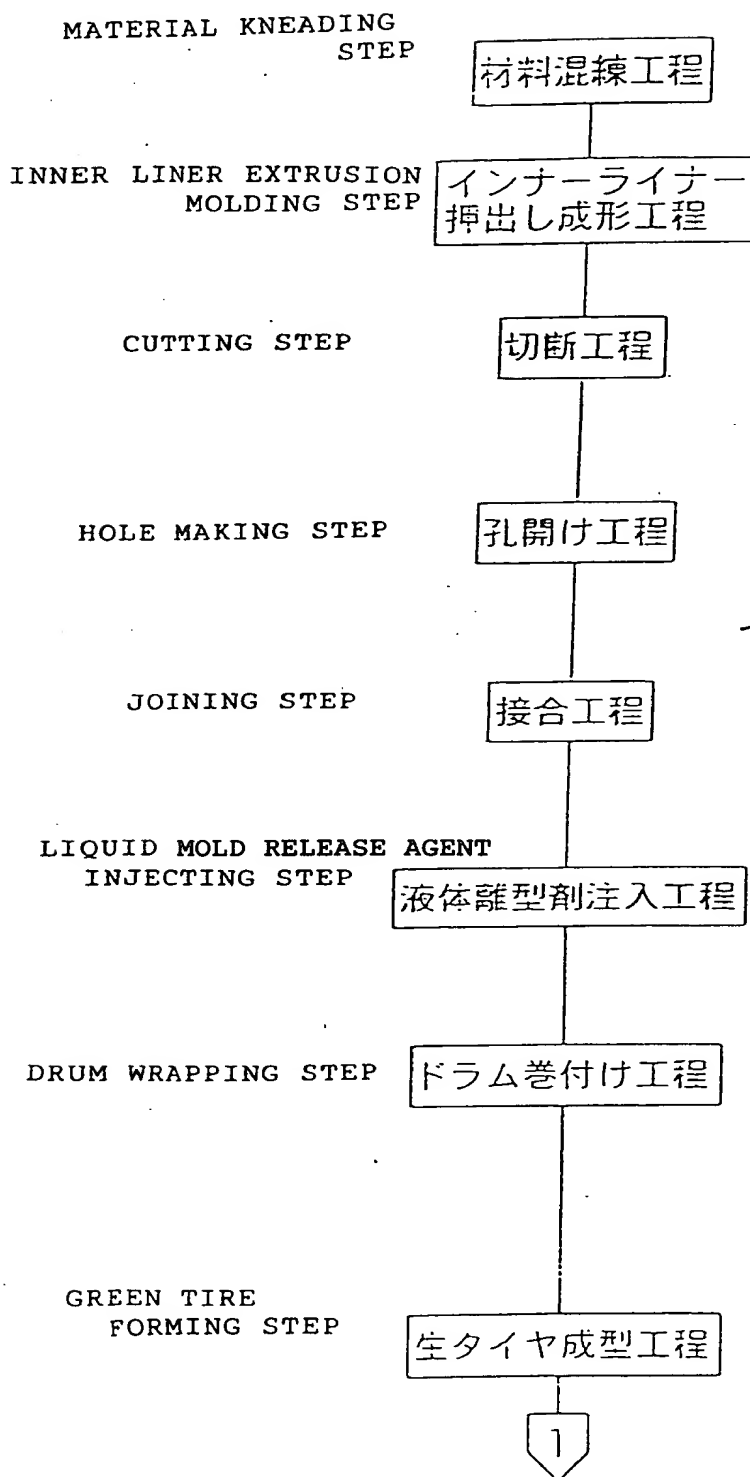
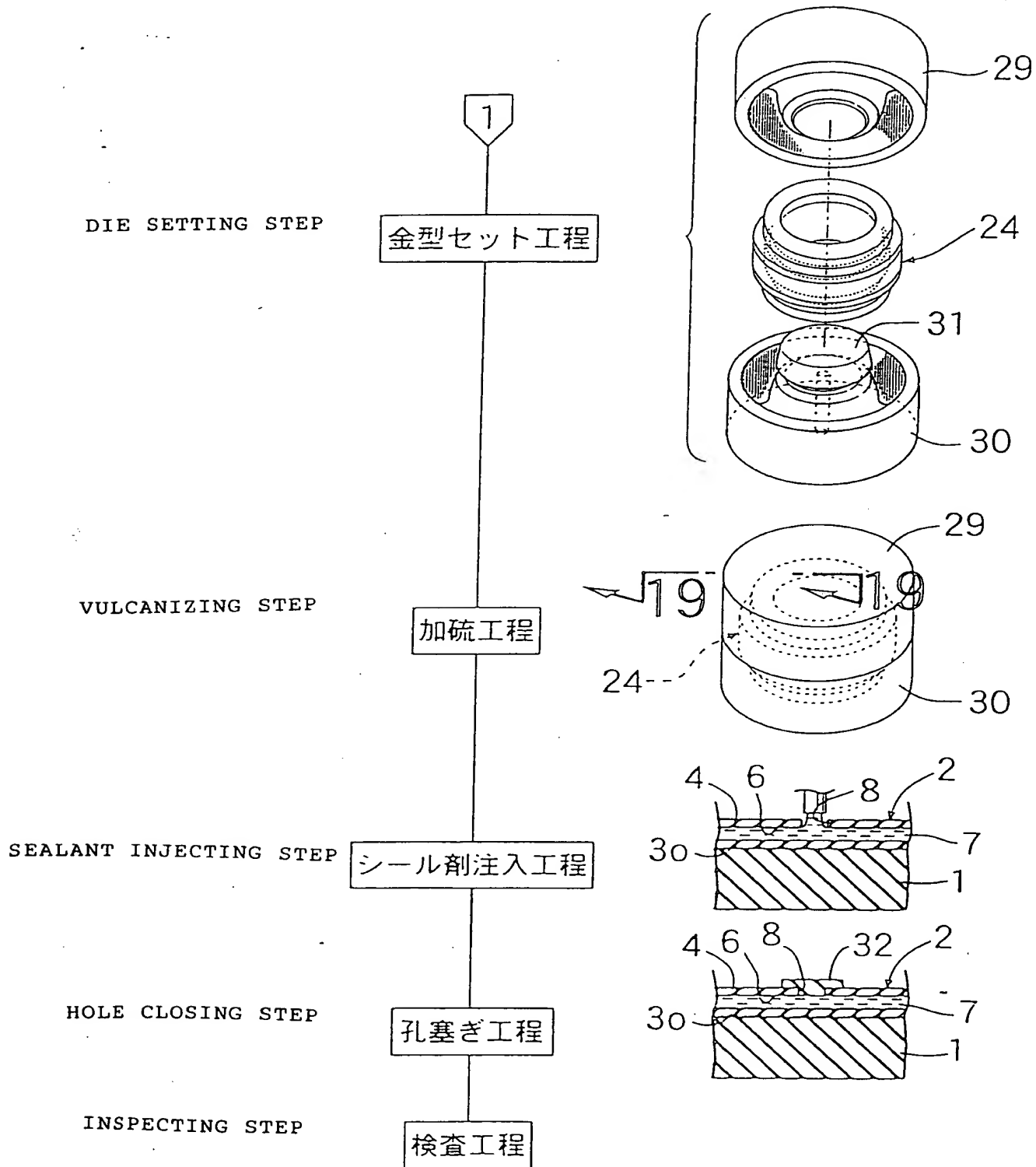


図 15
FIG. 15



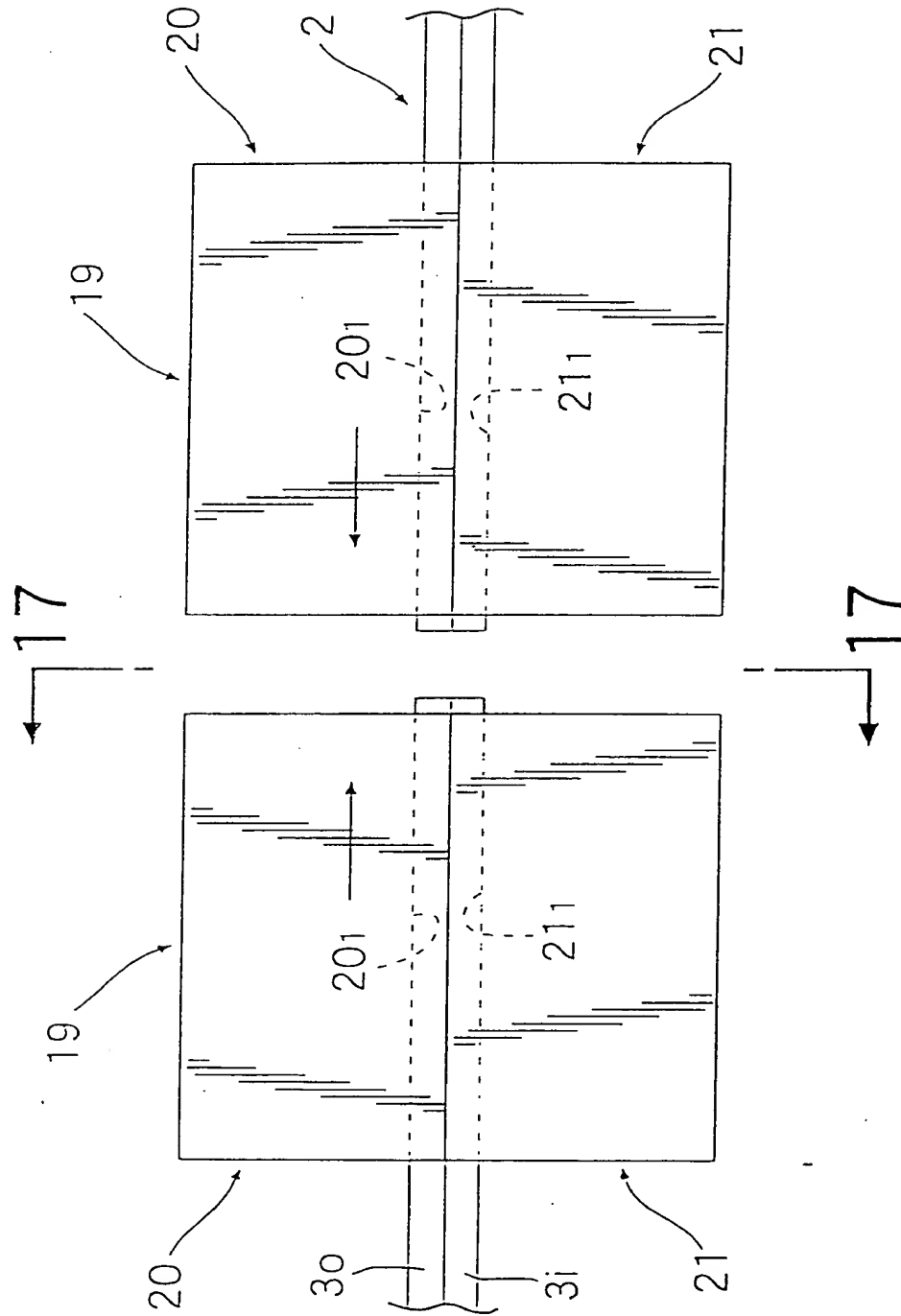




FIG. 17

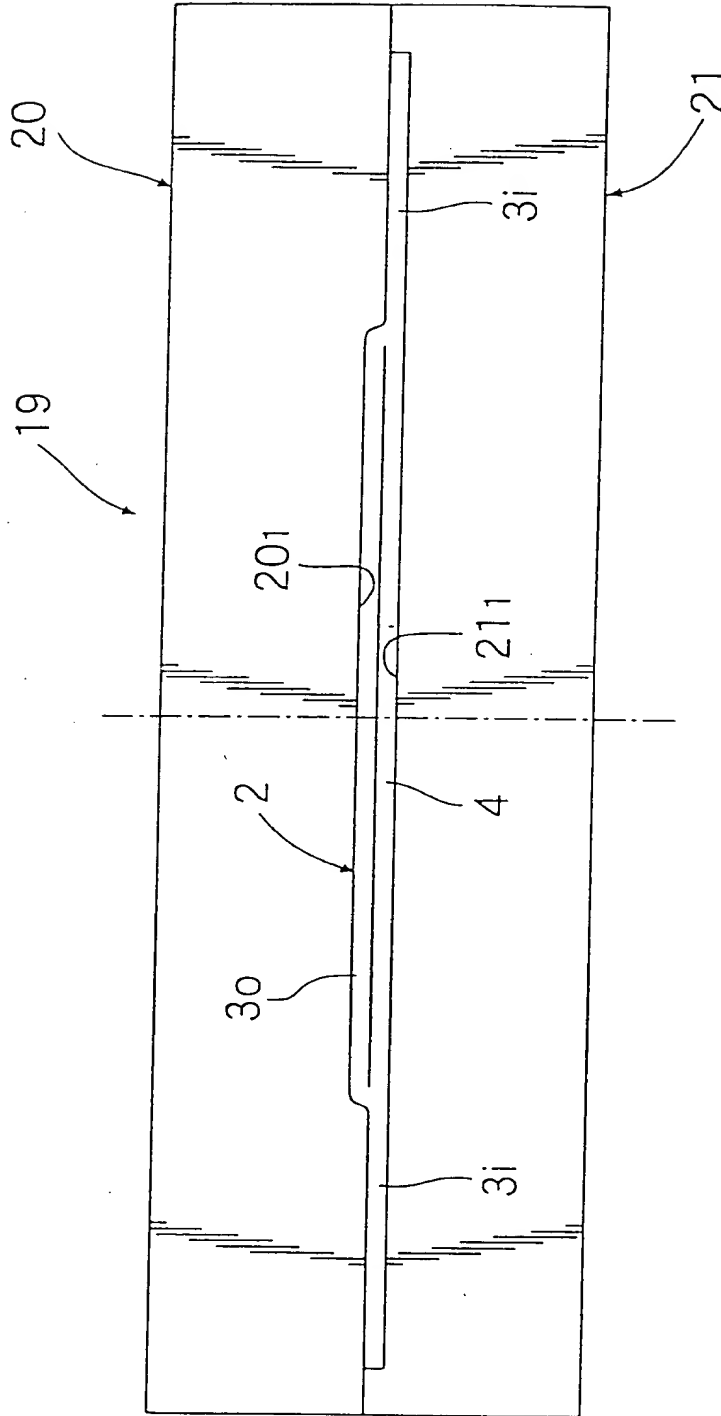




FIG. 18

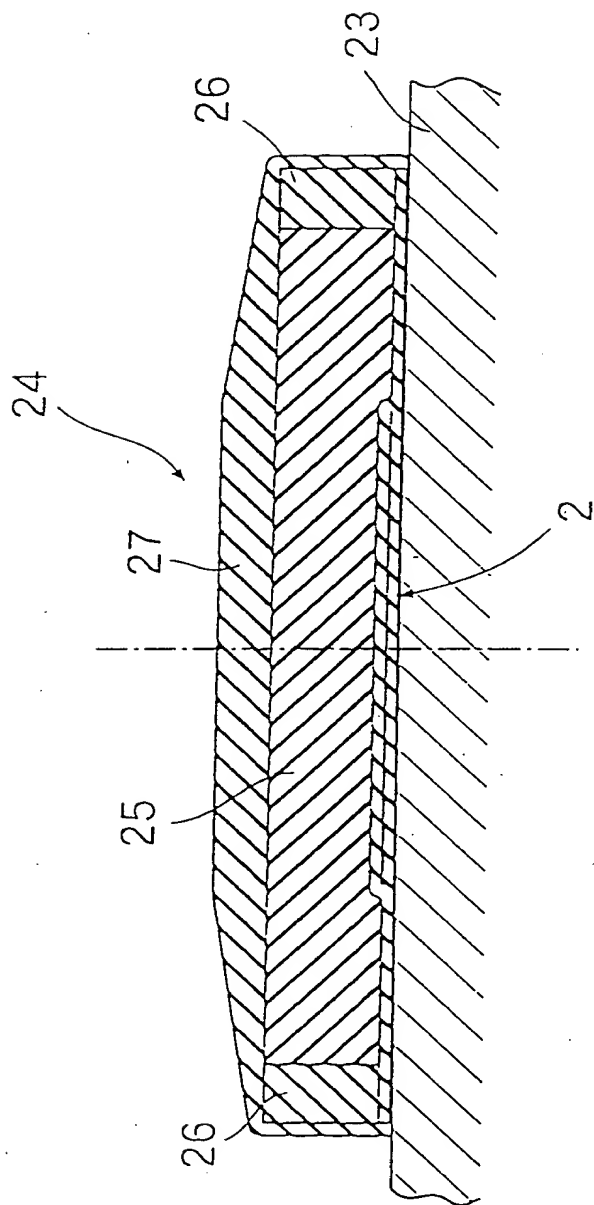


FIG. 19

FIG. 19

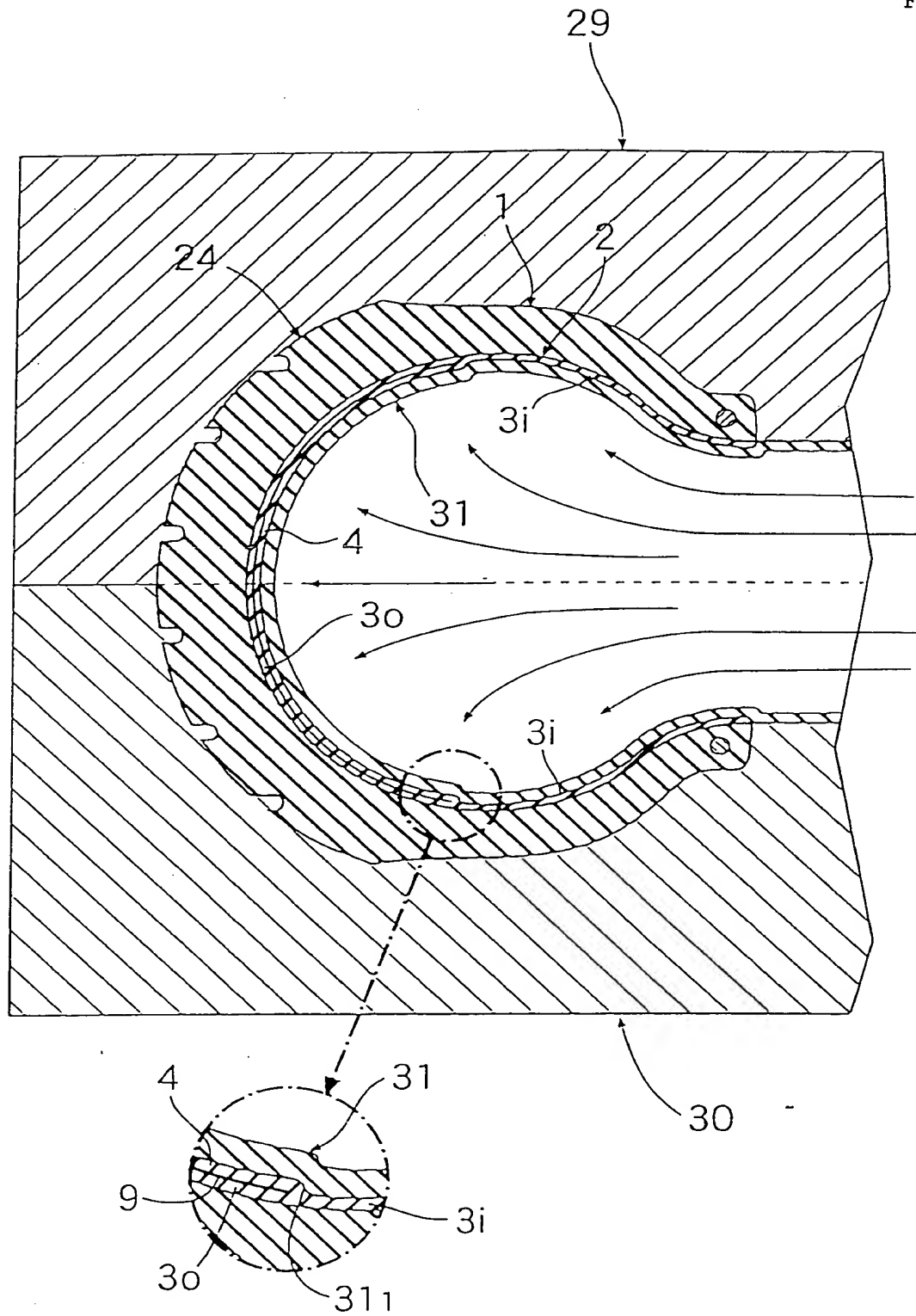




図 20
FIG. 20

MATERIAL KNEADING STEP

材料混練工程

INNER LINER EXTRUSION
MOLDING STEP

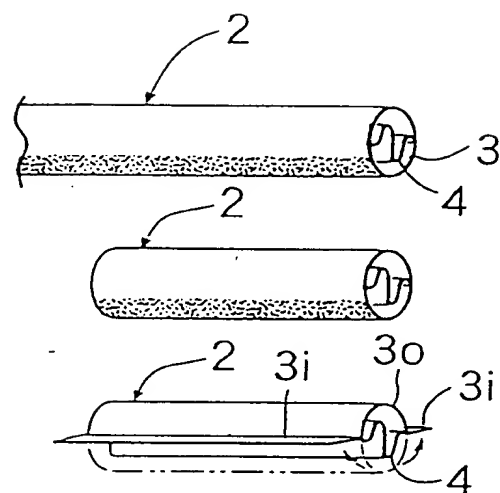
インナーライナー
押出し成形工程

CUTTING STEP

切断工程

CUT-OPENING STEP

切開工程



[DOCUMENT NAME] ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

[ABSTRACT]

[Problem] To clearly define the boundary between a bonded portion and an unbonded portion of an inner liner in vulcanizing a green tire, thereby forming a sealant chamber having a desired shape.

[Means for Solution] A green tire 24 prepared by bringing an inner liner 2 into contact with the inner surface of a tire body 1 is set between an upper die 29 and a lower die 30. In this condition, a pressure bag 31 placed inside the green tire 24 is expanded by air pressure to perform vulcanization and forming. Prior to such vulcanization, a mold release sheet 9 such as a fluoro resin sheet having a mold releasing property on one surface only is interposed between a part of the inner liner 2 and the tire body 1 in such a manner that the surface having the mold releasing property is opposed to the inner liner 2. Accordingly, this part of the inner liner 2 is prevented from being bonded by vulcanization to the tire body 1 owing to the presence of the mold release sheet 9, thereby forming a sealant chamber having a desired shape for containing a sealant. If the mold release sheet 9 is formed of a material soluble in a sealant, the reduction in sealability of the sealant due

to the mold release sheet remained in the sealant chamber
can be avoided.

[SELECTED FIGURE] FIG. 4



THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re the application of : Toshio YAMAGIWA

Serial Number: 09/623,481

Filed: September 14, 2000

For: SEALANT-INCORPORATED TIRE MANUFACTURING METHOD AND
SEALANT-INCORPORATED TIRE

VERIFICATION OF TRANSLATION

Honorable Commissioner
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Chiyoko Nozawa, residing at c/o Ochiai & Co., TO Building, 6-3, Taito
2-chome, Taito-ku, Tokyo, Japan, declares:

- (1) that she knows well both the Japanese and English languages;
- (2) that she translated from Japanese to English the priority document of
Japanese Patent Application No. 10-206471 filed on July 22, 1998 of which
priority is claimed in the above-identified U.S. Patent Application No. 09/623,481;
- (3) that the attached English translation is a true and correct translation
of the basic Japanese Patent application to the best of her knowledge and belief;
and
- (4) that all statements made herein of her own knowledge are true and
that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and
further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false
statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both,
under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful
false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent
issuing thereon.

Dated: March 13, 2003

Chiyoko Nozawa

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
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| [Reference No.] | A98-653 |
| [Filing Date] | July 22, 1998 |
| [To] | Commissioner of the Patent Office |
| [International Classification] | B29C 73/20 |
| | B60C 5/00 |
| [Title of the Invention] | SEALANT-INCORPORATED TIRE MANUFACTURING METHOD |
| [Number of Claim] | 6 |
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| [Registered Patent Attorney] | |
| [Name] | Kazuaki Niki |
| [Telephone No.] | 03-3434-4151 |
| [Priority Claim based on the Prior Application] | |
| [Application No.] | Patent Application No. 10-65383 |
| [Application Date] | March 16, 1998 |
| [Indication of Charge] | |
| [Prepayment Ledger No.] | 003001 |
| [Amount of Payment] | 21000 |
| [List of Filed Articles] | |
| [Name of Article] | Specification 1 |
| [Name of Article] | Drawing 1 |
| [Name of Article] | Abstract 1 |
| [General Power of Attorney No.] | 9713028 |
| [Need for Proof] | Needed |

[DOCUMENT NAME]

SPECIFICATION

[TITLE OF THE INVENTION]

SEALANT-INCORPORATED TIRE MANUFACTURING METHOD

[CLAIMS]

[claim 1] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method comprising the steps of superposing an inner liner (2, 2₁, 2₂) onto an inner surface of a tire body (1) prior to vulcanization and bonding at least a part of said inner liner (2, 2₁, 2₂) to the inner surface of said tire body (1) by vulcanization to define an annular sealant chamber (6) by said inner liner (2, 2₁, 2₂) inside a tread (15) of said tire body (1),

characterized in that a mold release sheet (9, 9₁, 9₂, 9₃) having a mold releasing property is placed on a portion of said inner liner (2, 2₁, 2₂) facing to said sealant chamber (6) prior to vulcanization.

[claim 2] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method according to claim 1, wherein at least a part of one surface of said mold release sheet (9) has the mold releasing property, and, in the vulcanization step, a part of said mold release sheet (9) which has no mold releasing property is bonded to a wall surface of said sealant chamber (6) by vulcanization.

[claim 3] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing

method according to claim 1, wherein said mold release sheet (9_1 , 9_2 , 9_3) is formed of a material soluble in a sealant (7), so that said mold release sheet (9_1 , 9_2 , 9_3) is dissolved into said sealant (7) by injecting said sealant (7) into said sealant chamber (6).

[claim 4] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method according to claim 3, wherein said mold release sheet (9_1 , 9_2 , 9_3) is formed of water-soluble paper or non-woven fabric.

[claim 5] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method according to claim 1, wherein a plurality of mold release sheets (9_1 , 9_2 , 9_3) are laminated one on another.

[claim 6] A sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method according to claim 1, wherein said mold release sheet (9_2) is folded into a corrugated shape prior to vulcanization, and said mold release sheet (9_2) is expanded in the vulcanization step.

[DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION]

[Technical Field to which the Invention Belongs]

The present invention relates to a manufacturing method for a sealant-incorporated tire having an annular sealant chamber defined by an inner liner inside a tread.

[Prior Art]

A sealant-incorporated tire is known from Japanese

Patent Application Laid-open No. 8-323875, for example. This sealant-incorporated tire has a sealant chamber at least a part of which is defined by an inner liner inside a tread of a tire body. The sealant chamber is filled with a sealant for sealing a puncture formed through the tread by a nail or the like to thereby delay air leakage from the puncture.

In manufacturing the above conventional sealant-incorporated tire, the inner liner is superposed onto the tire body prior to vulcanization. At this time, a mold release agent such as talc is preliminarily applied to a part of the contact surfaces of the inner liner and the tire body or to a part of the contact surfaces of inner liner elements forming the inner liner. In this condition, vulcanization is performed to integrate the inner liner with the tire body and form the sealant chamber by leaving the portion to which the mold release agent is applied unbonded.

[Problem to be Solved by the Invention]

It should be noted here that in performing vulcanization by inserting a green tire including a tire body and an inner liner into a heating die, the inner liner is expanded to produce an area where the density of talc as the mold release agent is high and an area where

it is low. As a result, the boundary between a bonded portion and an unbonded portion of the inner liner in the vulcanization process is not clearly defined, so that there is a possibility that the shape of the resultant sealant chamber may become imperfect. Accordingly, there is a problem that it is difficult to form a sealant chamber having a desired shape, and the degree of freedom in designing the shape of the sealant chamber is limited.

The present invention has been accomplished with the above circumstances in view, and it is an object of the present invention to clearly define the boundary between the bonded portion and the unbonded portion of the inner liner in vulcanizing the green tire, thereby forming a sealant chamber having a proper shape.

[Means of Solving the Problem]

To accomplish the above-described object, according to the invention as defined in claim 1, there is provided a sealant-incorporated tire manufacturing method comprising the steps of superposing an inner liner onto an inner surface of a tire body prior to vulcanization and bonding at least a part of the inner liner to the inner surface of the tire body by vulcanization to define an annular sealant chamber by the inner liner inside a tread of the tire body, characterized in that a mold

release sheet having a mold releasing property is placed on a portion of the inner liner facing to the sealant chamber prior to vulcanization.

With the above arrangement, the mold release sheet having the mold releasing property is placed on a portion of the inner liner facing to the sealant chamber in superposing the inner liner onto the inner surface of the tire body prior to vulcanization. Accordingly, this portion of the inner liner facing to the sealant chamber can reliably be prevented from being bonded by vulcanization to the inner surface of the tire body, and the remaining portion of the inner liner not facing to the sealant chamber can reliably be bonded by vulcanization to the inner surface of the tire body. As a result, the degree of freedom in designing the shape of the sealant chamber can be improved, and the sealant chamber can be formed into a proper shape.

According to the invention as defined in claim 2 in addition to the arrangement of claim 1, at least a part of one surface of the mold release sheet has the mold releasing property, and, in the vulcanization step, a part of the mold release sheet which has no mold releasing property is bonded to a wall surface of the sealant chamber by vulcanization.

With the above arrangement, the mold release sheet has a portion having the mold releasing property and a portion having no mold releasing property. The portion having the mold releasing property can prevent bonding of the inner liner to a part of the inner surface of the tire body by vulcanization to thereby form the sealant chamber. The portion having no mold releasing property allows the inner liner to be bonded to the wall surface of the sealant chamber by vulcanization to prevent random movement of the inner liner. Further, by setting the portion having the mold releasing property into a part of the one surface of the mold release sheet, the other part of the one surface can be used to bond the inner liner to the inner surface of the tire body by vulcanization, thereby stabilizing the shape of the sealant chamber.

According to the invention as defined in claim 3 in addition to the arrangement of claim 1, the mold release sheet is formed of a material soluble in a sealant, so that the mold release sheet is dissolved into the sealant by injecting the sealant into the sealant chamber.

With the above arrangement, if the sealant is injected into the sealant chamber, the mold release sheet is dissolved into the sealant. Accordingly, a reduction in sealability of the sealant due to the presence of the

mold release sheet in the sealant chamber can reliably be prevented.

According to the invention as defined in claim 4 in addition to the arrangement of claim 3, the mold release sheet is formed of water-soluble paper or non-woven fabric.

With the above arrangement, the mold release sheet can reliably be dissolved into the sealant by injecting the sealant into the sealant chamber.

According to the invention as defined in claim 5 in addition to the arrangement of claim 1, a plurality of mold release sheets are laminated one on another.

With the above arrangement, even if the mold release sheets are expanded with the tire body and the inner liner in the vulcanization step, the contact surfaces of the plural mold release sheets mutually slide to thereby prevent breaking of the mold release sheets. Accordingly, undesired bonding of the tire body and the inner liner by vulcanization can reliably be avoided.

According to the invention as defined in claim 6 in addition to the arrangement of claim 1, the mold release sheet is folded into a corrugated shape prior to vulcanization, and the mold release sheet is expanded in the vulcanization step.

With the above arrangement, even if the mold release sheets are expanded with the tire body and the inner liner in the vulcanization step, the corrugated mold release sheet which is folded into a corrugated shape is freely expanded, so that it is prevented from being broken. Accordingly, undesired bonding of the tire body and the inner liner by vulcanization can reliably be avoided.

[Mode for Carrying Out the Invention]

The mode for carrying out the present invention will now be described with reference to the embodiments shown in the attached drawings.

FIGS. 1 to 5 show a first preferred embodiment of the present invention, in which FIG. 1 is a laterally sectional view of a motorcycle wheel mounted with a tire; FIG. 2 is a first part of a flow diagram showing a manufacturing method for the tire; FIG. 3 is a second part of the flow diagram; FIG. 4 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along a line 4-4 in Fig. 2; and Fig. 5 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along a line 5-5 in Fig. 3.

As shown in Fig. 1, mounted on a rim R of a motorcycle wheel is a tubeless tire T including a tire body 1 and an inner liner 2 bonded to an inner portion of

the tire body 1 by vulcanization. The inner liner 2 is bonded by vulcanization at its right and left side portions except its central portion to an inner surface of the tire body 1, so that an air chamber 5 having a substantially circular shape in section is defined inside the inner liner 2, and a sealant chamber 6 having a substantially arcuate shape in section is defined between a non-bonded portion of the inner liner 2 and the inner surface of the tire body 1. The sealant chamber 6 is filled with a known liquid sealant 7.

The rim R includes an annular rim body 11 extending in the circumferential direction of the tire T and a pair of flanges 12, 12 extending radially outward from the laterally opposite ends of the rim body 11 to hold the inner circumference of the tire body 1. An air valve 13 for charging air into the air chamber 5 defined inside the inner liner 2 is supported through an air valve mounting portion 14 formed in one portion in the circumferential direction of the rim body 11.

The sealant chamber 6 defined between the inner liner 2 and the tire body 1 is maintained in a shape along an inner circumference of a tread 15 by air pressure in the air chamber 5. Accordingly, even when the tire body 1 is punctured by a nail or the like in the

radial direction of the tire T or from a side portion of the tread 15, a puncture formed through the tire body 1 is immediately filled and mended with the sealant 7, thereby delaying air leakage from the air chamber 5 through the puncture. Further, since the sealant 7 is kept contained in the sealant chamber 6 and does not enter the air chamber 5, there is no possibility that the air valve 13 or a pressure gauge and the like put to the air valve 13 may be clogged with the sealant 7.

A manufacturing method for the tire T will now be described with reference to Figs. 2 and 3.

The manufacturing method for the tire T includes an inner liner wrapping step, mold release sheet wrapping step, green tire wrapping step, die setting step, vulcanizing step, sealant injecting step, and inspecting step.

First, in the inner liner wrapping step, the cylindrical inner liner 2 of raw rubber is fitted around the outer circumference of a drum 23. In the subsequent mold release sheet wrapping step, a mold release sheet 9 is wrapped around the outer circumference of the inner liner 2. In the green tire wrapping step, each component of the tire body 1 is wrapped around the outer circumferences of the inner liner 2 and the mold release

sheet 9 to form a green tire 24.

Fig. 4 shows a lateral cross section of the green tire 24 wrapped around the drum 23. The inner liner 2 forming the innermost layer of the green tire 24 has a width W_1 , and the mold release sheet 9 stacked on the outer surface of the inner liner 2 has a width W_2 smaller than the width W_1 of the inner liner 2. Accordingly, the inner liner 2 partially projects from the opposite side edges of the mold release sheet 9. The mold release sheet 9 is formed from a fluoro resin sheet (e.g., Teflon sheet) or a silicone resin sheet having a thickness of 50 μ m or less, which are commercially available. For example, Aflex (trade name) manufactured by Asahi Glass Co., Ltd. may be used as the Teflon sheet.

One surface of the mold release sheet 9 is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment, so as to eliminate surface lubrication and thereby enhance adhesion to rubber. This treated surface of the mold release sheet 9 is brought into contact with the tire body 1, and the other untreated surface having the mold releasing property is brought into contact with the inner liner 2.

The corona discharge treatment is performed by generating high-voltage corona discharge between an

electrode connected to a high-voltage generator and a metal roll of which surface is coated with polyester, Hypalon, EP rubber, etc. while passing the mold release sheet 9 as a subject to be treated along the metal roll to thereby make ozone or nitrogen oxide that has created corona react with the exposed surface of the mold release sheet 9, thereby making this surface hydrophilic because of generation of resultant carbonyl groups or the like. The CS treatment is performed by carrying out plasma discharge treatment under vacuum instead of the corona discharge, and the function and effect similar to those of the corona discharge treatment can be obtained.

The tire body 1 of raw rubber is wrapped around the outer circumferences of the inner liner 2 and the mold release sheet 9 to form the green tire 24. The tire body 1 is comprised of a cord portion 25 wrapped around the radially outside of the inner liner 2 and the mold release sheet 9, a pair of bead portions 26, 26 fitted with the outer circumference of the inner liner 2 so as to be joined with axially opposite ends of the cord portion 25, and a tread portion 27 wrapped around the radial outside of the cord portion 25 and the bead portions 26, 26 so as to cover them.

Subsequently, in the die setting step, the green

tire 24 removed from the drum 23 is set between an upper die 29 and a lower die 30 for vulcanization and forming. Further, in the vulcanizing step as shown in Fig. 5, the upper die 29 and the lower die 30 are heated, and a pressure bag 31 placed inside the green tire 24 is expanded by air pressure to thereby bring the green tire 24 into pressure contact with the inner forming surfaces of the upper die 29 and the lower die 30, thus vulcanizing and forming the green tire 24 into a final product shape. By this vulcanization and forming, the inner liner 2 is integrated with the tire body 1.

At this time, the mold release sheet 9 is sandwiched and is compressed between the inner liner 2 and the tire body 1 by the pressure from the pressure bag 31 expanded. However, the other surface (i.e., the untreated surface) of the mold release sheet 9 abutting against the inner liner 2 is not bonded to the inner liner 2 by vulcanization, but the one surface (i.e., the treated surface) of the mold release sheet 9 abutting against the tire body 1 is bonded to the tire body 1 by vulcanization.

Thus, a portion of the inner liner 2 that must be bonded to the tire body 1 by vulcanization can reliably be bonded by vulcanization, and a portion of the inner

liner 2 that must not be bonded to the tire body 1 by vulcanization can reliably remain in the non-bonded state by using the mold release sheet 9, thereby forming the sealant chamber 6 having a proper shape between the inner liner 2 and the tire body 1. Furthermore, since the mold release sheet 9 is bonded and fixed to the inner surface of the tire body 1 by vulcanization, there is no possibility that the mold release sheet 9 may move in the sealant chamber 6 at random to hinder the free flow of the sealant 7, thereby reliably exhibiting a sealing effect by the sealant.

After the vulcanization and forming, the tire body 1 and the inner liner 2 integrated together are removed from the upper and lower dies. In the next sealant injecting step, the sealant 7 is injected into the sealant chamber 6 by using an injector or the like, thus completing the tire T. In the final inspecting step, the completed tire T is inspected to terminate all the steps.

A second embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIGS. 6 and 7.

As shown in Fig.6, a tire T according to the second embodiment includes a first inner liner 2₁ bonded by vulcanization to a radially outside portion of an inner surface of a tire body 1, and a second inner liner 2₂,

bonded by vulcanization to a radially inside portion of the inner surface of the tire body 1 and to right and left opposite end portions of the first inner liner 2₁. A sealant chamber 6 is defined between the first inner liner 2₁ and the second inner liner 2₂. A mold release sheet 9 is fixed by vulcanization and bonding to a wall surface of the first inner liner 2₁ facing to the sealant chamber 6.

Fig. 7 shows a green tire wrapping step for the tire T according to the second embodiment. A second inner liner 2₂ is wrapped around an outer circumference of a drum 23, a mold release sheet 9 is wrapped around the outer circumference of the second inner liner 2₂, and a first inner liner 2₁ is wrapped around the mold release sheet 9. A surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the first inner liner 2₁ is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment, and this treated surface of the mold release sheet 9 is bonded by vulcanization to the first inner liner 2₁. A surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the second inner liner 2₂ exhibits its mold releasing property to define the sealant chamber 6. According to the second embodiment, the function and effect similar to those of the first embodiment can be obtained.

A third embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to Figs. 8 and 9.

As shown in Fig. 8, a tire T according to the third embodiment includes a single inner liner 2 as similar to the tire T according to the first embodiment. The inner liner 2 is bonded by vulcanization at its opposite end portions to an inner surface of a tire body 1 as in the first embodiment. Additionally, the central portion of the inner liner 2 is also bonded by vulcanization to the inner surface of the tire body 1 over a given width (e.g., 5 mm). Accordingly, sealant chambers 6, 6 are separated into right and left chambers by a central bonded portion 32 of the inner liner 2, thereby stabilizing the shape of each of the sealant chambers 6, 6. Further, in the case that the tire T is large in size, movement of a sealant 7 charged in each of the sealant chambers 6, 6 can be minimized.

Fig. 9 shows a green tire wrapping step for the tire T according to the third embodiment. The inner liner 2 is wrapped around an outer circumference of a drum 23, and two mold release sheets 9, 9 are wrapped around the outer circumference of the inner liner 2 so as to be spaced apart from each other by a distance of 5 mm. Further, each component of the tire body 1 is wrapped

around the outer circumference of the inner liner 2, thus forming the green tire 24. A surface of each of the mold release sheets 9, 9 opposed to the inner liner 2 has a mold releasing property, and a surface of each of the mold release sheets 9, 9 opposed to the tire body 1 is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment to lose its mold releasing property. Accordingly, each of the two separate sealant chambers 6, 6 can be formed into a proper shape.

Incidentally, while the two mold release sheets 9, 9 are laterally spaced apart from each other in manufacturing the tire T having the structure shown in Fig. 8 according to the third embodiment, a single mold release sheet 9 may be used by the following two methods to obtain a similar effect.

According to the first method, the entirety of the surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the tire body 1 is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment to eliminate its mold releasing property, and a part of the surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the inner liner 2 is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment to eliminate its mold releasing property. Accordingly, a part of the surface opposite to the surface of the mold

release sheet 9 bonded to the tire body 1 is bonded to the inner liner 2, thereby obtaining the tire T having the structure as shown in Fig. 8. The part, of which mold releasing property is eliminated, of the surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the liner 2 may be in the form of lines or spots.

According to the second method, the surface of the mold release sheet 9 opposed to the tire body 1 is preliminarily subjected to corona discharge treatment or CS treatment to eliminate its mold releasing property, and slits or spot openings are then formed through the mold release sheet 9. Accordingly, the inner liner 2 is brought into contact with the tire body 1 through the above slits or spot openings of the mold release sheet 9, and is bonded by vulcanization to the tire body 1, thereby obtaining the tire T having the structure as shown in Fig. 8.

A fourth embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIGS. 10 and 11.

In contrast with the first to third embodiments each employing the single mold release sheet 9, according to the fourth embodiment, three mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ are positioned in a laminated state between a first inner liner 2₁ and a second inner liner 2₂ in the

condition of a green tire 24, as shown in Fig. 10. Each of the three mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ is formed of a material soluble in a sealant 7 composed mainly of water and ethylene glycol. Examples of this material include water-soluble paper and non-woven fabric.

By laminating the three mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ one on another as described above, it is possible to avoid a break of these sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ in a vulcanizing step wherein the green tire 24 is set between an upper die 29 and a lower die 30 and vulcanized while heating to be formed into a final product shape, thereby reliably preventing a possibility of bonding of the first inner liner 2₁ and the second inner liner 2₂ by vulcanization. More specifically, the mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ are expanded with the green tire 24 in opposite directions shown by arrows a-a in FIG. 11(A) in the vulcanizing step. At this time, the mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ slide mutually to be prevented from breaking, so that there is no possibility of direct contact of the first inner liner 2₁ and the second inner liner 2₂ in the broken portion. More preferably, talc is attached to opposite surfaces of the central mold release sheet 9₂, thereby improving the mutual slide of the mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ to more reliably prevent the

break.

Thereafter, the sealant 7 is injected into the sealant chamber 6. Because the mold release sheets 9_1 , 9_2 , and 9_3 remaining in the sealant chamber 6 are dissolved as shown in Fig. 11(B), the sealability of the sealant 7 can reliably be prevented from being hindered by the remaining of the mold release sheets 9_1 , 9_2 , and 9_3 .

A fifth embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIG. 12.

The fifth embodiment is characterized in that one (e.g., the central mold release sheet 9_2) of the three mold release sheets 9_1 , 9_2 , and 9_3 used in the fourth embodiment is preliminarily formed into a corrugated shape. With this configuration, even if the upper and lower mold release sheets 9_1 and 9_3 are broken in the vulcanizing step wherein the green tire 24 and the three mold release sheets 9_1 , 9_2 , and 9_3 are expanded so that the green tire 24 is formed into a final product shape, the corrugated mold release sheet 9_2 is expanded to become linear and is prevented from being broken, thereby reliably preventing direct contact of the first inner liner 2_1 and the second inner liner 2_2 to prevent bonding of these inner liners 2_1 and 2_2 by vulcanization.

Having thus described the embodiments of the

present invention, various design changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention.

For example, the mold release sheets 9, 9₁, 9₂, 9₃ in each of the first to third and fifth embodiments may be formed of a material soluble in the sealant 7. Further, while the three mold release sheets 9₁, 9₂, and 9₃ are laminated one on another in each of the fourth and fifth embodiments, two mold release sheets or four or more mold release sheets may be laminated one on another.

[Effect of the Invention]

As described above, according to the invention as defined in claim 1, the mold release sheet having the mold releasing property is placed on a portion of the inner liner facing to the sealant chamber in superposing the inner liner onto the inner surface of the tire body prior to vulcanization. Accordingly, this portion of the inner liner facing to the sealant chamber can reliably be prevented from being bonded by vulcanization to the inner surface of the tire body, and the remaining portion of the inner liner not facing to the sealant chamber can reliably be bonded by vulcanization to the inner surface of the tire body. As a result, the degree of freedom in designing the shape of the sealant chamber can be improved, and the sealant chamber can be formed into a

proper shape.

According to the invention as defined in claim 2, the mold release sheet has a portion having the mold releasing property and a portion having no mold releasing property. The portion having the mold releasing property can prevent bonding of the inner liner to a part of the inner surface of the tire body by vulcanization to thereby form the sealant chamber. The portion having no mold releasing property allows the inner liner to be bonded to the wall surface of the sealant chamber by vulcanization to prevent random movement of the inner liner. Further, by setting the portion having the mold releasing property into a part of the one surface of the mold release sheet, the other part of the one surface can be used to bond the inner liner to the inner surface of the tire body by vulcanization, thereby stabilizing the shape of the sealant chamber.

According to the invention as defined in claim 3, if the sealant is injected into the sealant chamber, the mold release sheet is dissolved into the sealant. Accordingly, a reduction in sealability of the sealant due to the presence of the mold release sheet in the sealant chamber can reliably be prevented.

According to the invention as defined in claim 4,

the mold release sheet can reliably be dissolved into the sealant by injecting the sealant into the sealant chamber.

According to the invention as defined in claim 5, even if the mold release sheets are expanded with the tire body and the inner liner in the vulcanization step, the contact surfaces of the plural mold release sheets mutually slide to thereby prevent breaking of the mold release sheets. Accordingly, undesired bonding of the tire body and the inner liner by vulcanization can reliably be avoided.

According to the invention as defined in claim 6, even if the mold release sheets are expanded with the tire body and the inner liner in the vulcanization step, the corrugated mold release sheet which is folded into a corrugated shape is freely expanded, so that it is prevented from being broken. Accordingly, undesired bonding of the tire body and the inner liner by vulcanization can reliably be avoided.

[BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS]

[FIG. 1]

FIG. 1 is a laterally sectional view of a motorcycle wheel mounted with a tire.

[FIG. 2]

FIG. 2 is a first part of a flow diagram showing a

manufacturing method for the tire shown in FIG. 1.

[FIG. 3]

FIG. 3 is a second part of the flow diagram.

[FIG. 4]

FIG. 4 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along a line 4-4 in Fig. 2

[FIG. 5]

FIG. 5 is an enlarged cross-sectional view taken along a line 5-5 in Fig. 3.

[FIG. 6]

Fig. 6 is a laterally sectional view of a motorcycle wheel mounted with a tire according to a second embodiment of the present invention.

[FIG. 7]

Fig. 7 is a sectional view similar to Fig. 4, according to the second embodiment.

[FIG. 8]

Fig. 8 is a laterally sectional view of a motorcycle wheel mounted with a tire according to a third embodiment of the present invention.

[FIG. 9]

Fig. 9 is a sectional view similar to Fig. 4, according to the third embodiment.

[FIG. 10]

Fig. 10 is a sectional view similar to Fig. 4, according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention.

[FIG. 11]

Fig. 11 are sectional views respectively showing a condition where a tire vulcanizing step is finished and a condition where a sealant injecting step is finished, according to the fourth embodiment.

[FIG. 12]

Fig. 12 is a sectional view similar to Fig. 4, according to a fifth embodiment of the present invention.

[Explanation of Reference Numerals]

1: tire body

2: inner liner

2₁: first inner liner (inner liner)

2₂: second inner liner (inner liner)

6: sealant chamber

7: sealant

9: mold release sheet

9₁: mold release sheet

9₂: mold release sheet

9₃: mold release sheet

15: tread



FIG. 1

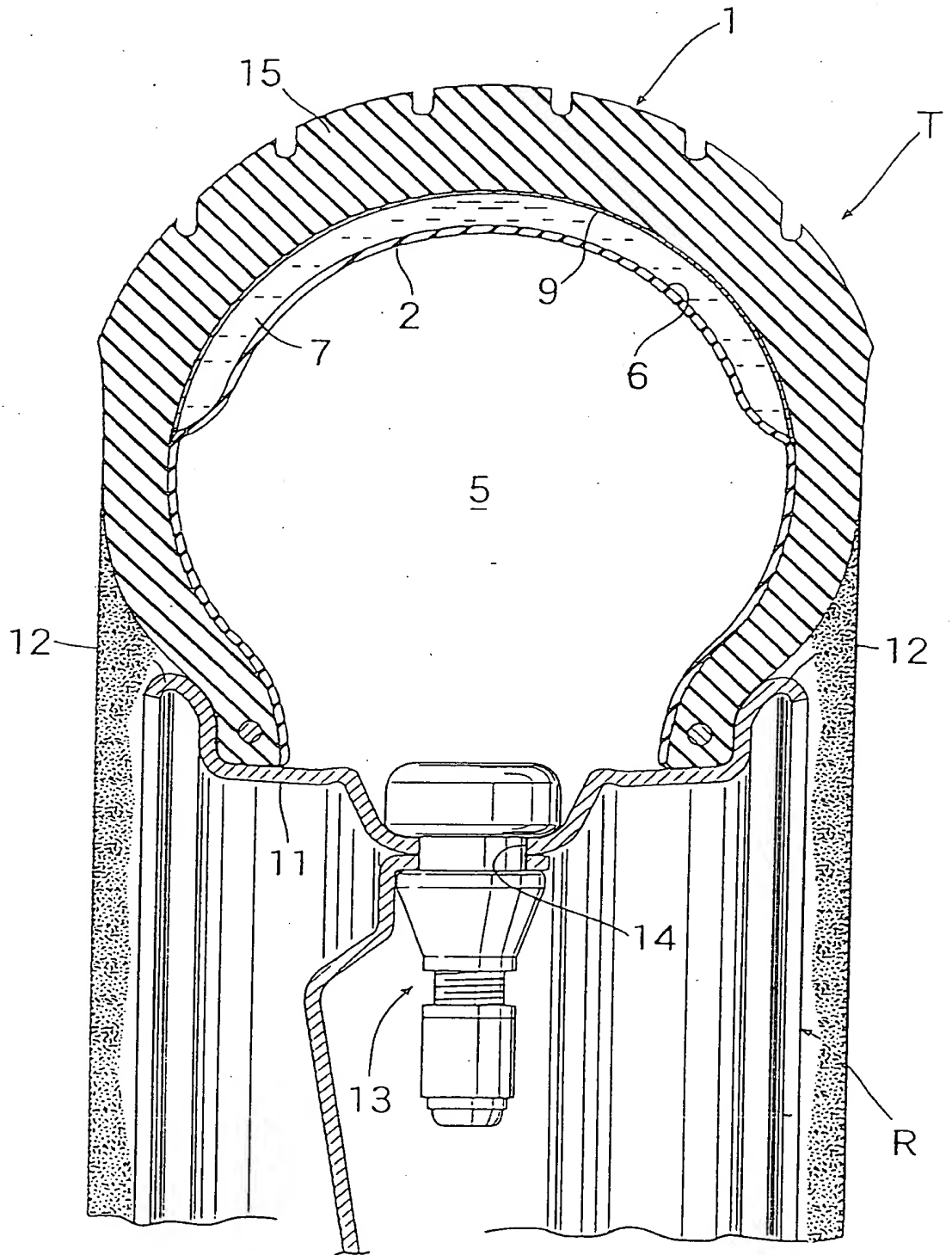


図 2
FIG. 2

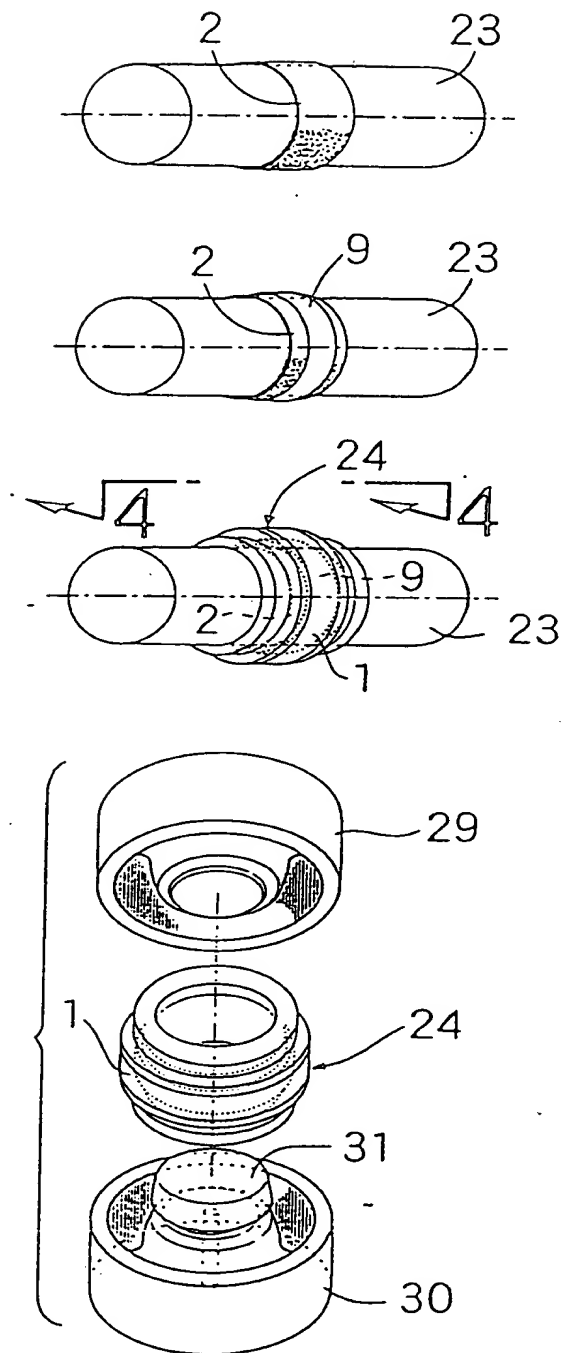
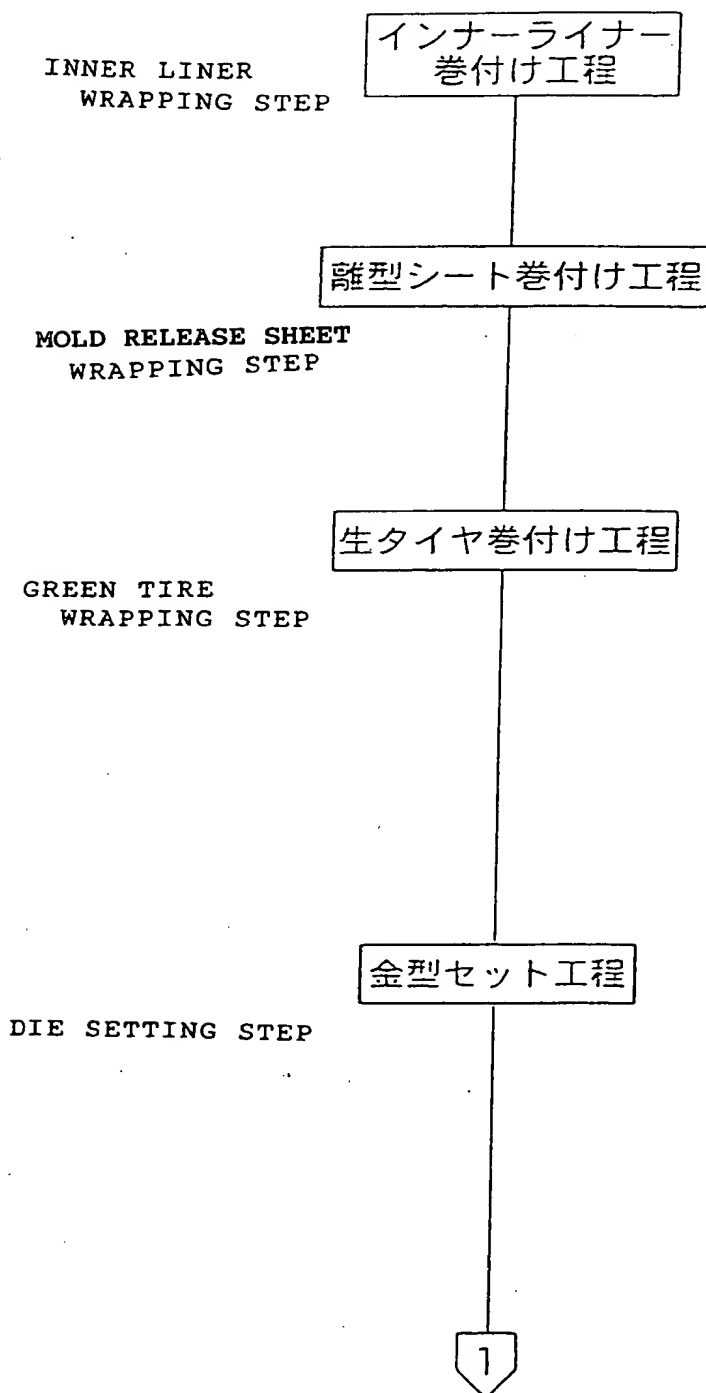


図 3
FIG. 3

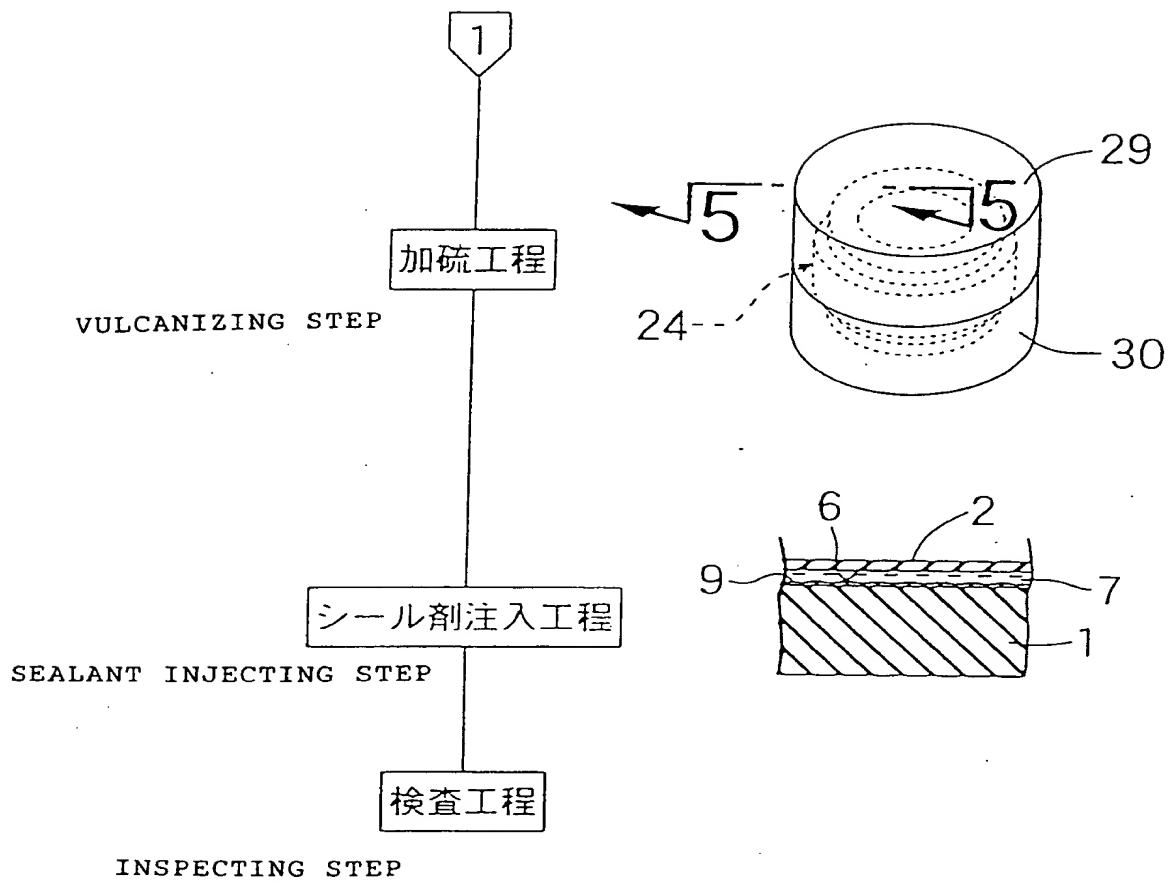




FIG. 4

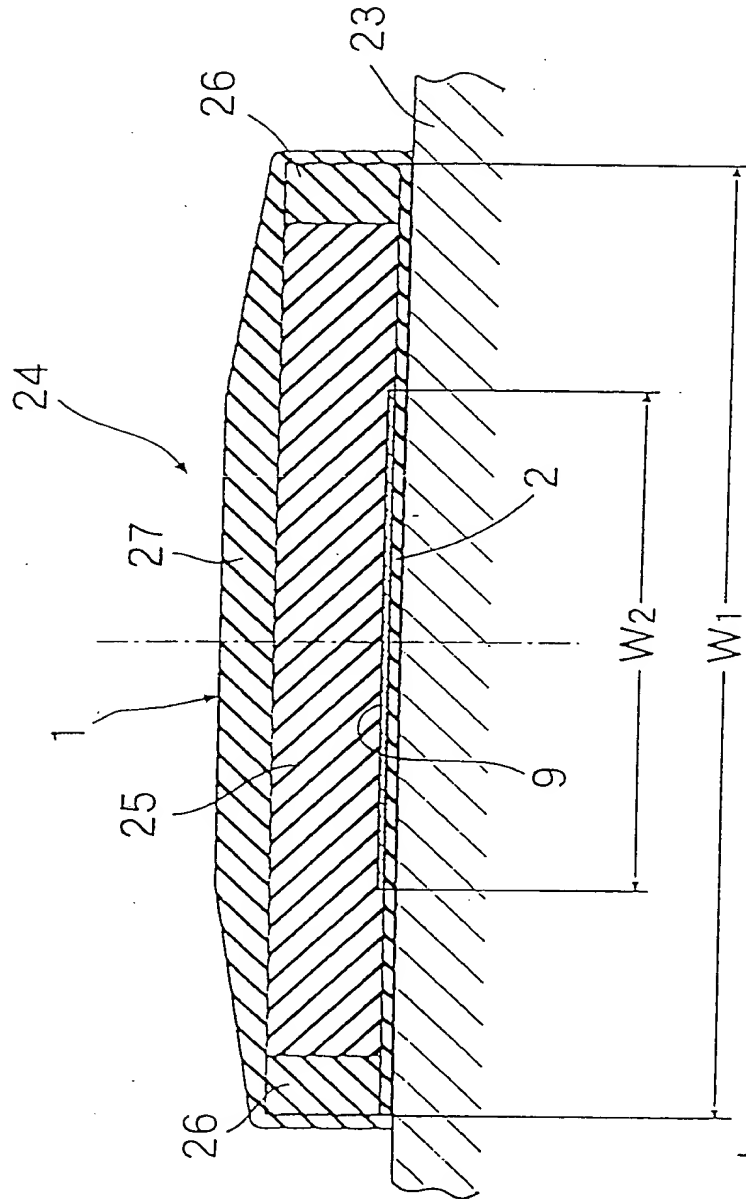


FIG. 5

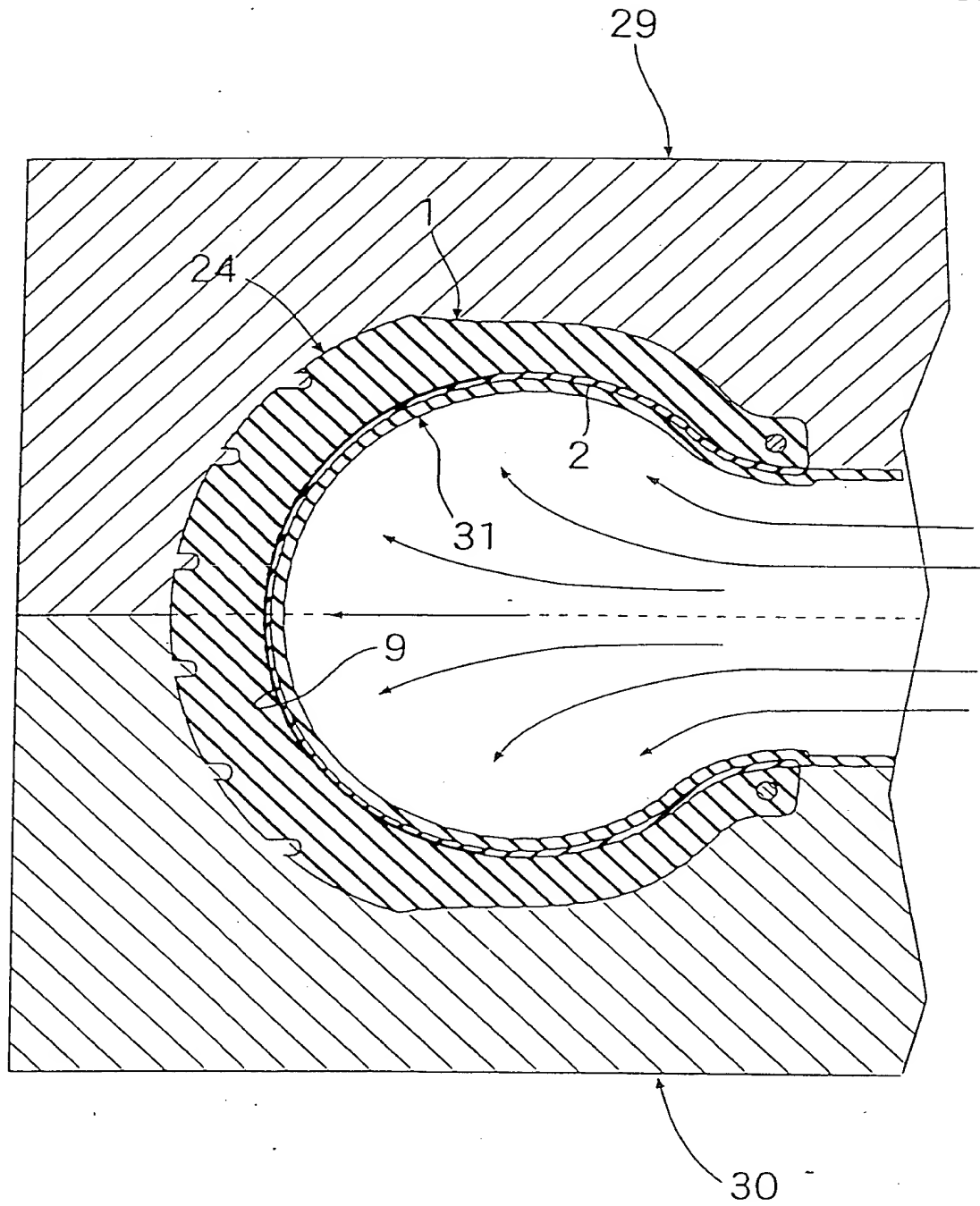




FIG. 6

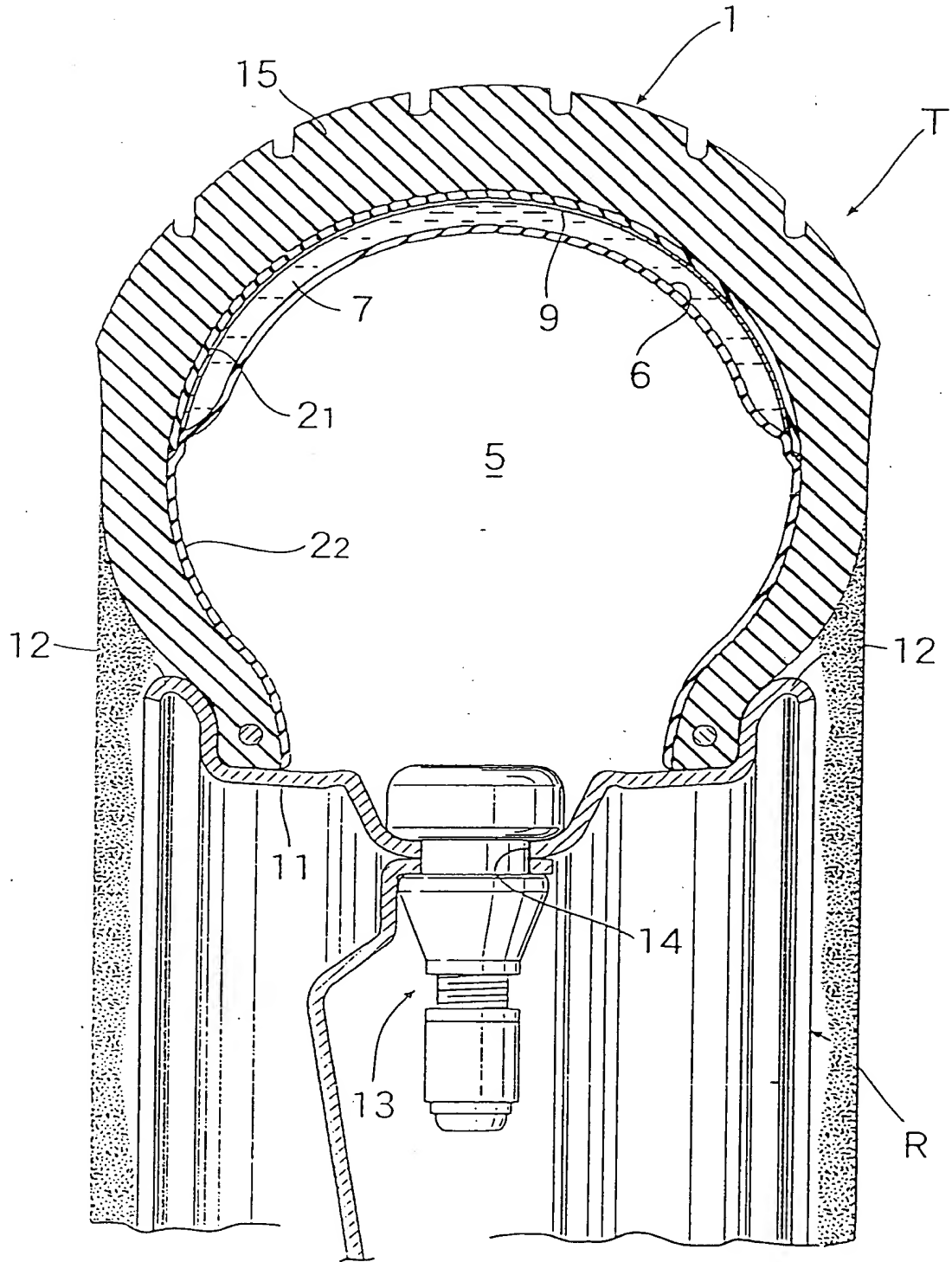




図 7
FIG. 7

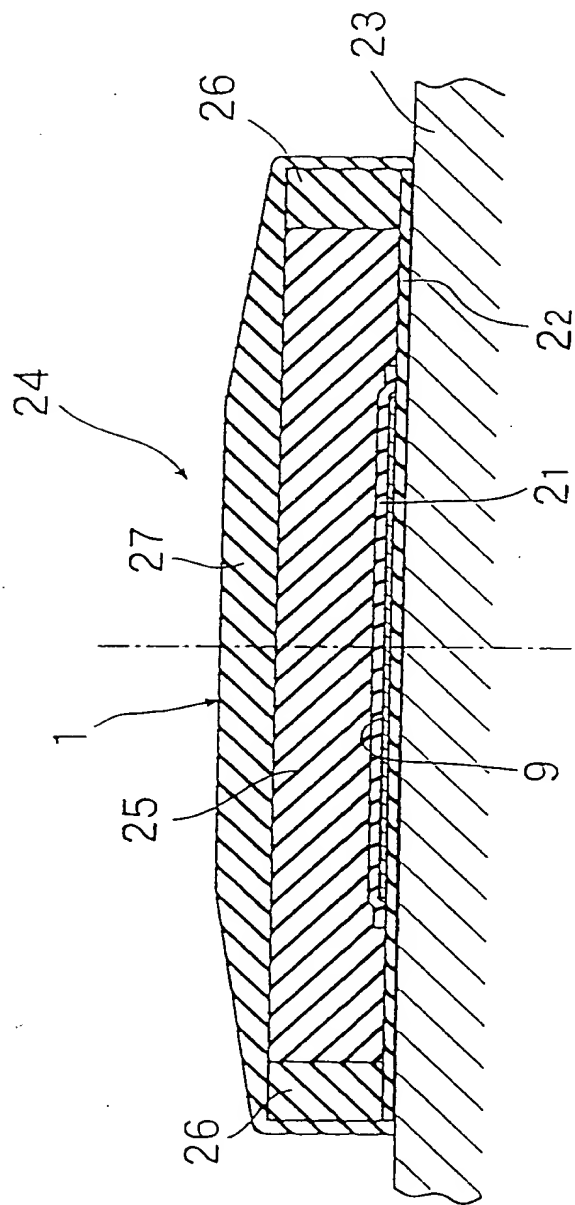


FIG. 8

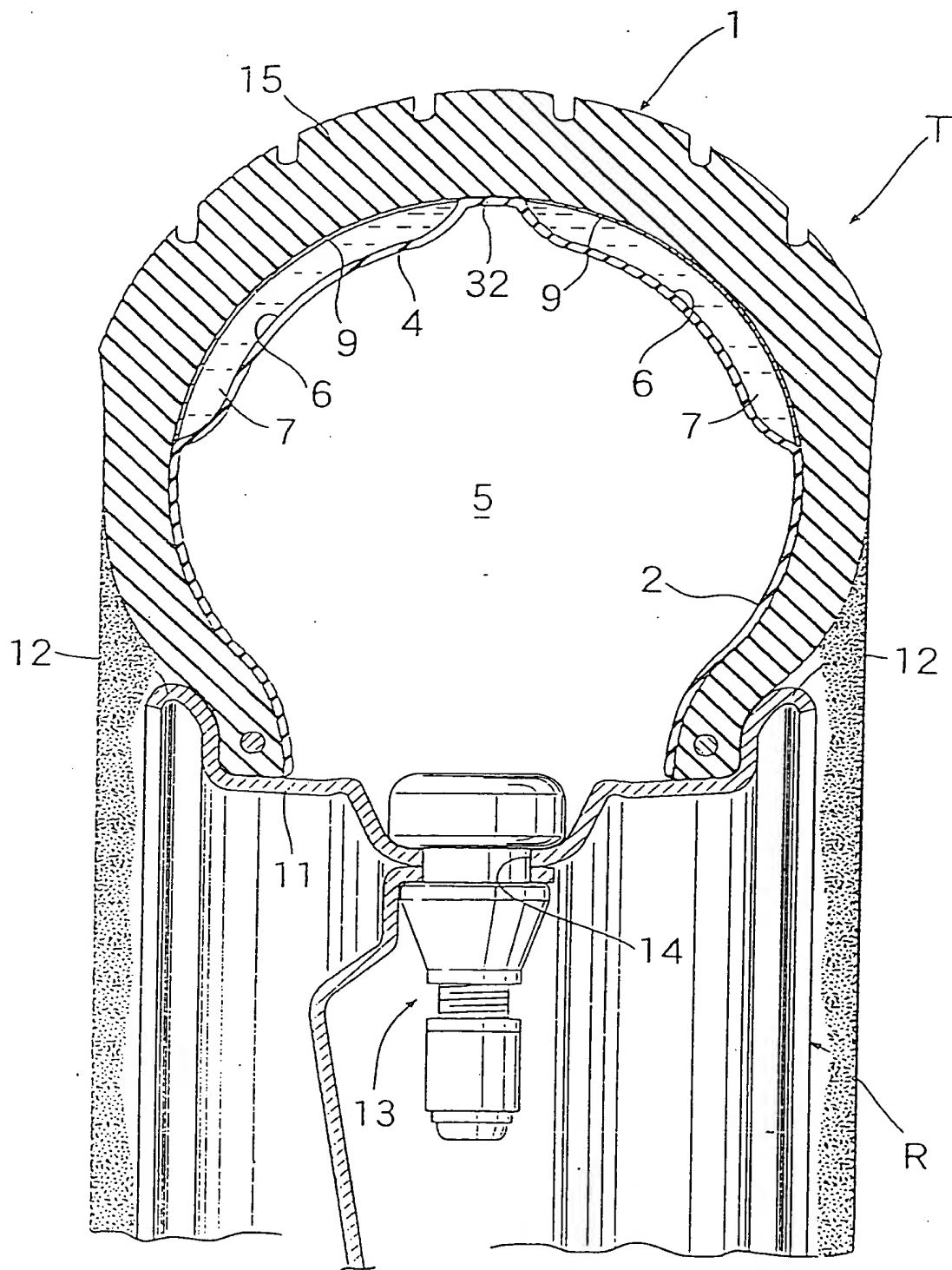
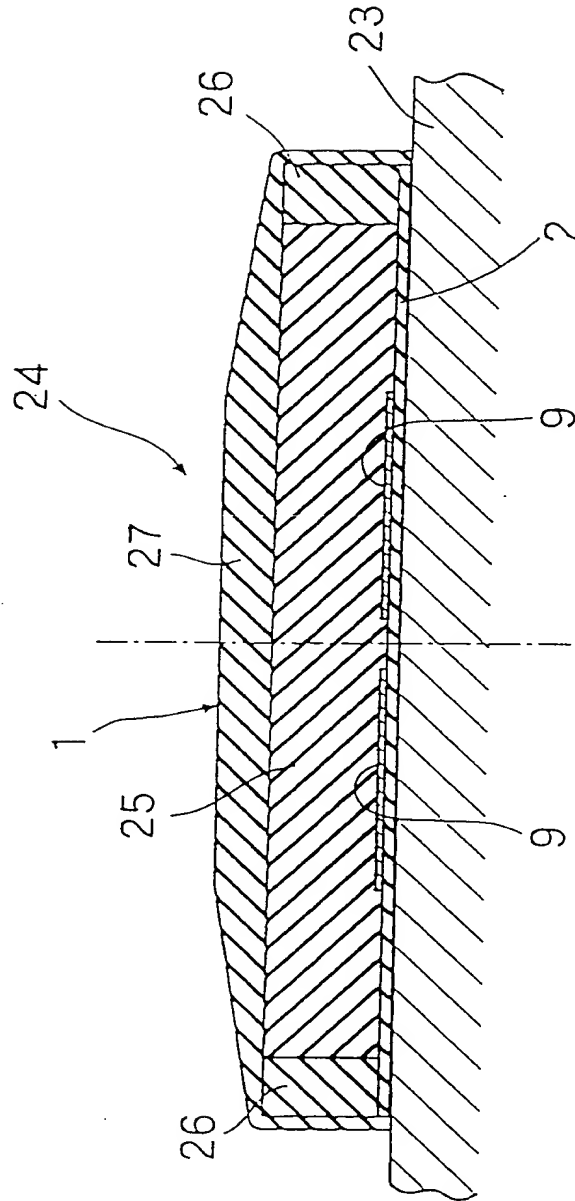




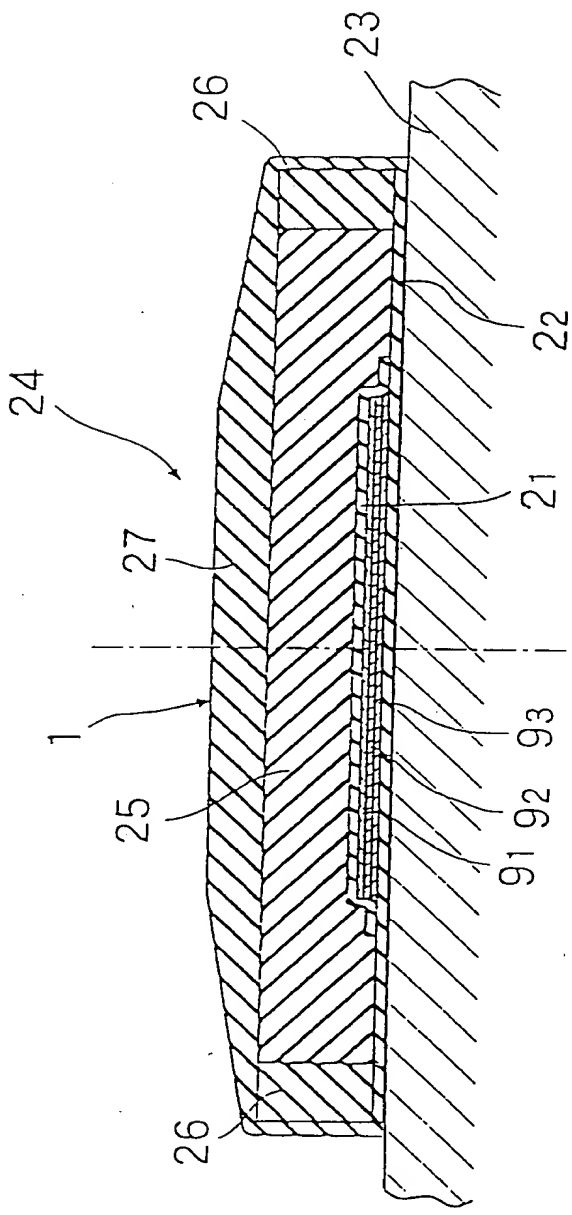
FIG. 9



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FIG. 10



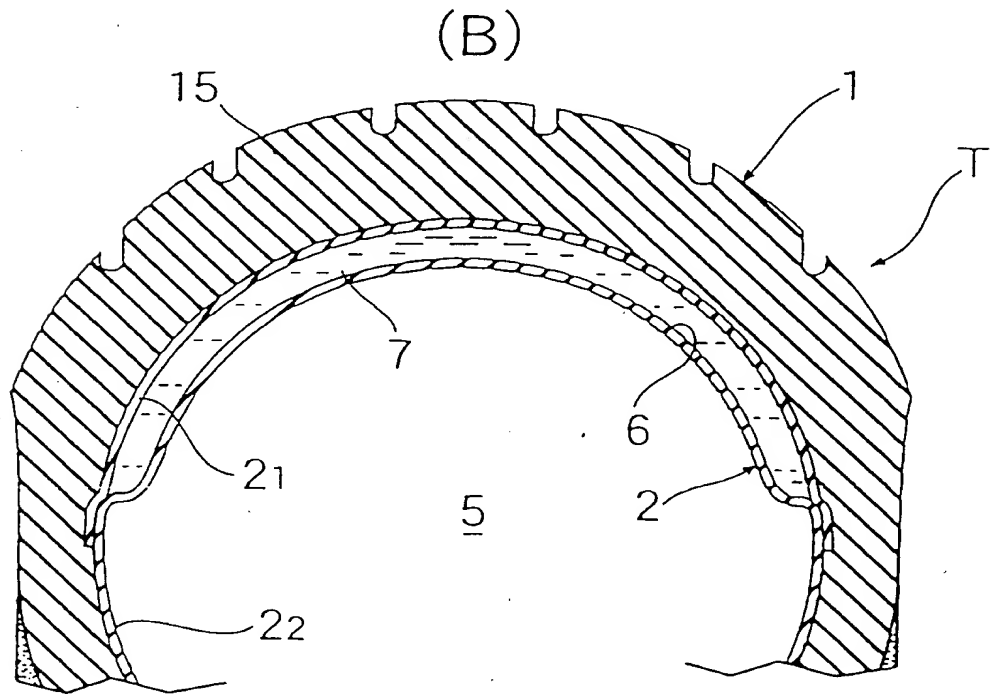
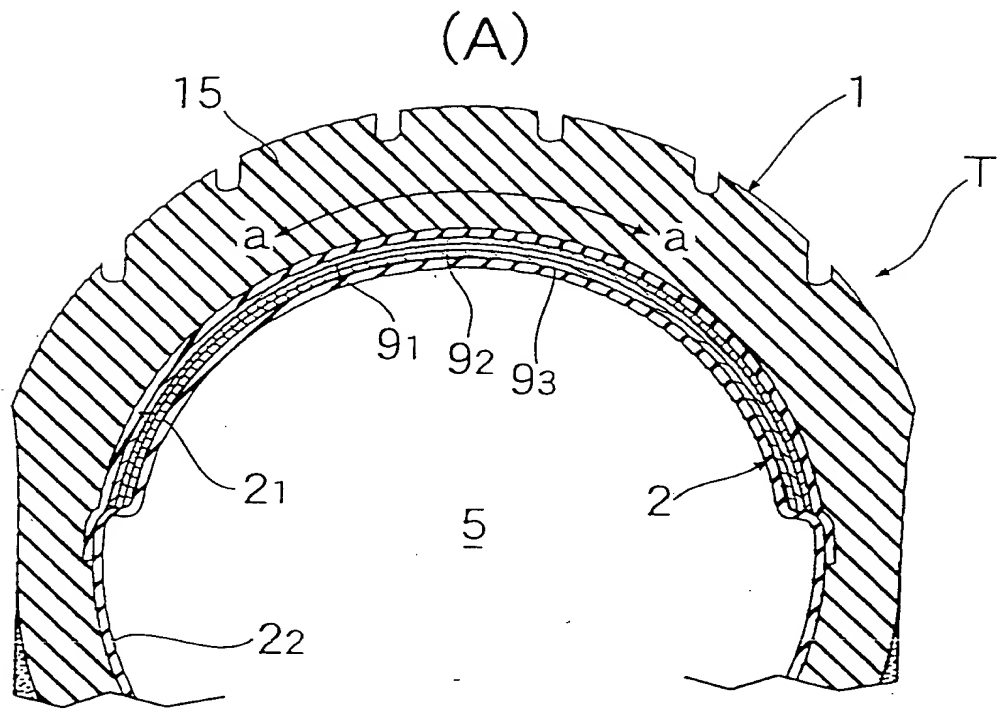
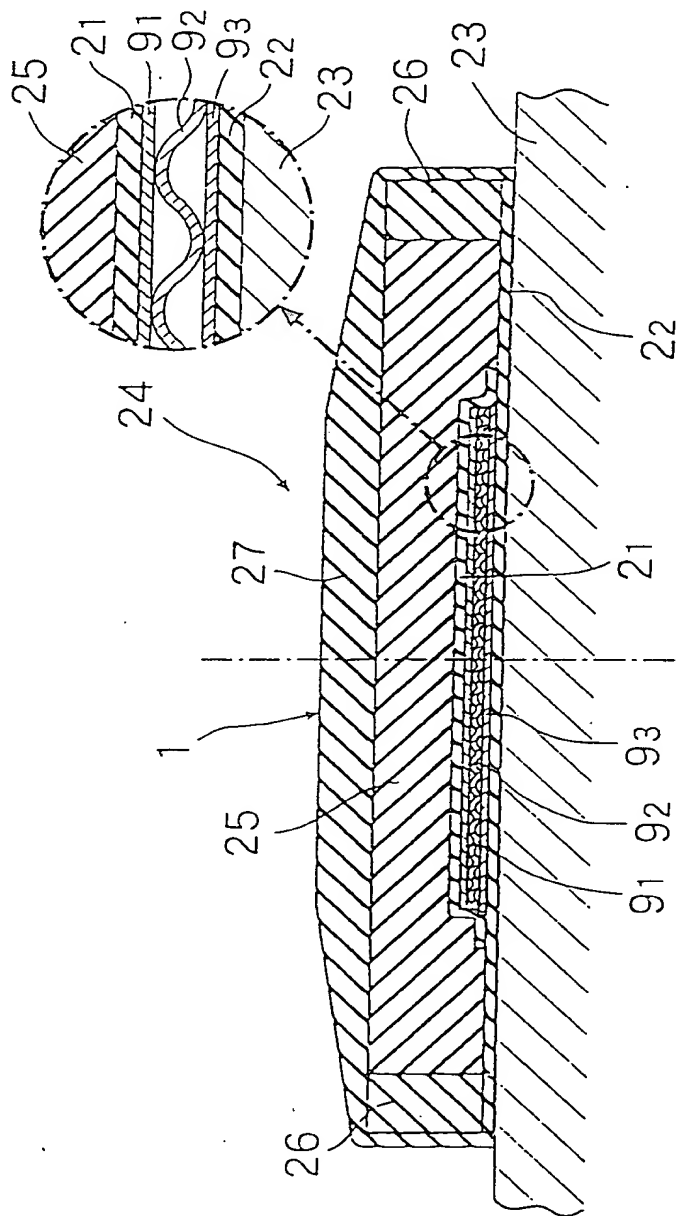




FIG. 12



[DOCUMENT NAME] ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

[ABSTRACT]

[Problem] To clearly define the boundary between a bonded portion and an unbonded portion of an inner liner in vulcanizing a green tire, thereby forming a sealant chamber having a desired shape.

[Means for Solution] A green tire 24 prepared by bringing an inner liner 2 into contact with the inner surface of a tire body 1 is set between an upper die 29 and a lower die 30. In this condition, a pressure bag 31 placed inside the green tire 24 is expanded by air pressure to perform vulcanization and forming. Prior to such vulcanization, a mold release sheet 9 such as a fluoro resin sheet having a mold releasing property on one surface only is interposed between a part of the inner liner 2 and the tire body 1 in such a manner that the surface having the mold releasing property is opposed to the inner liner 2. Accordingly, this part of the inner liner 2 is prevented from being bonded by vulcanization to the tire body 1 owing to the presence of the mold release sheet 9, thereby forming a sealant chamber having a desired shape for containing a sealant. If the mold release sheet 9 is formed of a material soluble in a sealant, the reduction in sealability of the sealant due

to the mold release sheet remained in the sealant chamber
can be avoided.

[SELECTED FIGURE] FIG. 4